THE IDEA OF THE ABSOLUTE IN MODERN BRITISH PHILOSOPHY

BY

REVEREND JOSEPH T. BARRON, S. T. L.

of the Archdiocese of St. Paul

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF SACRED SCIENCES OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF SACRED THEOLOGY

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FOREWORD

Absolute idealism is a movement which bulks large in the current philosophical and theological scene. While it is primarily a philosophy, like other contemporary currents of thought, it impinges on the field of theology. It is a challenge to conventional Christian theism, and hence its treatment as a theological movement needs no apology.

However the premises of absolutism are philosophical. The existence of the Absolute, whether it is identified with God or not, is established through philosophical reasoning. No appeal is made by the absolutistic school to revelation, or to the usual proofs adduced by theistic thinkers. In fact the force of these latter is decried as inept. Hence it is the belief of the author that absolutism can best be dispossessed from the position of prestige it now enjoys by a critical examination of its philosophical presuppositions. Absolutism and theism meet in philosophy as on a common ground; philosophy is their main point of contact.

Any discussion of the validity of the absolutistic conception of the universe from a purely theological standpoint, any discussion which does not go back to the philosophical foundations of absolutism, runs the risk of inappositeness. Absolutism is an attempt to substitute the Absolute for the God of Christianity. To the absolutist the latter is a fiction, and the argumentation which essays to prove His existence is fictitious. Clearly nothing can be gained for the theistic cause by urging theological views which, to the absolutistic mind, are invalid. It would seem to be more effective to make a direct attack on the ultimate reasons for absolutism itself. Such an attack cannot be inept, nor can it be irrelevant.

As the title indicates, the absolutism of British thinkers alone will be evaluated. British absolutism is not without interest to American students because its success in Great Britain has had its counterpart in this country. It has been a puissant force in

shaping the philosophical and theological thought of the United States.

While British absolutism is a well-defined movement, it has within itself diverging currents of thought. Because of these latter it has been discussed as professed by its principal adherents. This method of treatment not only permits an exposition of the various trends of absolutism, but it also permits a detailed criticism of the different proofs advanced by the adherents of these trends. Despite these cleavages, however, there exists a solidarity of belief among all absolutists. The essential tenets to which they subscribe have been discussed chiefly in connection with Thomas H. Green and John Caird. This was necessary to avoid duplication of criticism. But it must be borne in mind that what is there stated concerning the essential doctrine of absolutism, viz., the identification of mind, or thought, with reality, applies with equal force to all members of this school.

CHAPTER I

The Rise of British Idealism

Idealism of the Hegelian trend has long been the dominating school of English thought. Owing to the influence of the English universities, where for several decades it was in the ascendant, it enjoyed almost unquestioned sway among the greatest of the English thinkers. It became, in Russel's phrase, the "classical tradition" in English philosophy.[1]

The influence of Hegel was felt in other countries as well. Germany, France, Italy, and the United States, all came under the spell of the great German thinker.[2] There is nothing novel in this fact. Great thinkers always form schools of thought. But the rallying of English thinkers around the Hegelian standards is an anomaly.

English thought, previous to its conversion to absolutism, had a definite empirical bent. It had always been at the opposite pole of thought from monism. The Olympians of British philosophy, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Mill, were all empiricists. In their theories of knowledge they stressed the importance of the sensed, and they correspondingly distrusted the findings of the intellect. The synthetic tendency, which is so marked in the idealistic mind, is almost wholly lacking in these thinkers. The empiricist tradition was thus deeply embedded in British thought, and the *volté face* to absolutism demands an explanation.[3]

One explanation advanced for the conversion of English thinking to idealism is that the tenets of idealism are an offset

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[1] Scientific Method in Philosophy, p. 3.

[2] Consult, H. Höffding, History of Modern Philosophy, vol. 2; Moog, Die Deutsche Philosophie, des 20 Jahrhunderts; Schjeldrup, Hauptlinien der Entwicklung, etc.; Parodi, La Philosophie Contemporaine en France; Rogers, English and American Philosophy since 1800; Ruggiero, La filos. contemp.

[3] For the traits of British thought, consult Perry, The Present Conflict of Ideals, pp. 479 et seq.

to the naturalistic credo which prevailed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The works of Buckle and Owen were symptomatic of the widespread rebellion against the current theological thought. Even before the philosophy of evolution, with its naturalistic leanings, became the vogue, there was a definite turning to the truths of science as a means of liberation from the thraldom of religious superstition. There was a feeling that religion sidestepped the claims of intellectual honesty by edifying evasions. Leslie Stephen, Grant Allen, William Clifford, and the positivistic school which numbered among its adherents Congreve, Bridges, and Harrison, all found serious fault with the beliefs of contemporary theology. As an antidote to the naturalism which has made such inroads into the thought of the time, as an effort to revindicate the spiritualistic interpretation of the universe, recourse was had to German idealism.[4]

This explanation is buttressed by the fact that the conception of the creative function of the mind, which absolutism carried over from Kant, is a weapon that is highly successful in parrying the thrusts of a scientific or materialistic philosophy. Absolutism, being essentially a polemic against materialism, was a standard around which those who stood for some sort of spiritualism could rally. It was a philosophy already thought out, it was at hand, and, once its strength was envisaged, it was adopted.

Another contributing cause for the adoption of absolutism by British thinkers is the fact that this foreign-born philosophy was an anodyne for the excessive individualism which had been the outcome of the economic and political thought of the first half of the nineteenth century.[5] In both economic and political fields the tendency was towards the emancipation of the individual from social control. The interests of the individual were paramount to the interests of society as a whole. Gradually the view insinuated itself that a laissez-faire policy was anything but beneficial—that human independence must be supplanted by human interdependence. From the latter view it was but a short step to the conception that society, or the state, is not only

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[4] See Rogers, op. cit., p. 207; Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy, Lecture 3.

[5] The Social Origin of Absolute Idealism, Sabine, Journal of Philosophy, vol. 12, 1915.

a means to the furthering of the ends of individuals, but that it is a source of new values. In this opinion the welfare of the individual must be subjected to the welfare of society; it is not an end in itself, but a means to the end of the state. The individual exists for the state, not the state for the individual. This is a distinctive idealistic doctrine—that the reality is the larger organic whole of which the individual is but a mode or an aspect. Hegelian idealism fitted in admirably with these beliefs. It offered a rational basis for this view of the function of the state, and hence it was adopted.

The first serious attempt to introduce Hegel to the English world was made by J. H. Stirling in his "Secret of Hegel." [6]

Carlyle and Coleridge had given expression to sentiments which were idealistic in tendency before him, but their connection with German idealism was casual at best.[7] Stirling was a physician by profession. Hearing of Hegel in a conversation, he was at once impelled to a study of that thinker. He became so enamored of the Hegelian system that he gave up his practice and went to live on the continent where he devoted himself to the study of his mentor. The fruit of this study appeared in the volume mentioned above.[8] "The Secret of Hegel" consists of a lengthy introduction, a translation of parts of Hegel's "Logic," a commentary, and original doctrine. In the introduction Stirling attempts to show that the philosophy of Hegel is neither obsolete nor maleficent. Stirling depreciates the value of English thought as a whole, and he extols the merits of German philosophy. He attacks the Aufklärung as being inimical both to religion and to the best interests of society, and he hails idealism as the best weapon for putting an end to the materialistic and individualistic tendency which had English thought in its grasp. He endeavors to prove the orthodoxy of Hegel.[9]

So anxious is he to establish the fact that the thought of Hegel squares with the teachings of Christianity that at times he becomes fanciful.[10] The style of the "Secret" is not always free from obscurity; it is characterized by an unacademic gusto

[6] Published in 1865, and republished in 1898.

[7] Rogers, op. cit., p. 207 ff.

[8] Consult the bibliography for the other works of Stirling. See also, A. Stirling, J. Stirling, His Life and Work.

[9] Pp. 719 ff., edition of 1898.

[10] See p. 750.

which does not make for clarity. Stirling's own contribution to English idealism was practically negligible. He is an advocate of simon-pure Hegelianism. But his book is an adumbration of the significant change that was to come over English philosophy—a change that was due in a large measure to the works of Thomas Hill Green.[11]

[11] For the rise of English idealism see Haldar, Neo-Hegelianism, chapter 1; Hoernlé, Idealism as a Philosophy; Hastings, Dictionary of Religion and Ethics, article on Neo-Hegelianism, vol. 9, p. 300; Waddington, The Development of British Thought.

CHAPTER II

The Idea of God in the Philosophy of T. H. Green

Thomas H. Green (1836-1882) was professor of moral philosophy at Oxford. He was thoroughly imbued with the belief that right thinking is necessary for right living—this was the thought that motivated his philosophical treatises, and that fired him and his associates with a sustained enthusiasm for formulating and spreading their views. While his system of philosophy was constructive, it was preceded by a searching criticism of the philosophical views then prevalent in England. He singles out as the objects of his attack the systems of Mill and Spencer, and he shows that they are but derivatives of the thought of Hume.[1] English empiricism, he maintains, eliminates the work of "mind" from the world of knowledge, and it reduces the object of knowledge to mere sensation. The mind by association, reproduction, and abstraction of these sensations may, and does, elaborate what passes for knowledge, but de facto the object of knowledge is the fleeting sensations of the individual, and our concepts, which seemingly represent essential aspects of the world of reality—concepts of substance, causality, etc.,—are but illegitimate figments which the mind wrongly imposes on reality. The logical outcome of empiricism is, as Hume concluded, that knowledge is impossible. Empiricism as reflected in the thought of Hume, Mill, and Spencer must therefore be discarded. The new masters to be followed are Kant and Hegel, for it is in their belief, that the relational activity of mind is involved in the very existence of the real world, that the salvation of English thought lies. It was to spread this novel cult that he wrote his greatest work, "Prolegomena to Ethics," which appeared in 1883, the year after his death.[2] This work contains Green's constructive philosophy. In it he expounds neither

[1] See Introduction to Hume's "Treatise," Green and Grose.

[2] See also his "Collected Works," edited by R. L. Nettleship, in three volumes, 1885-1888.

a system of metaphysics nor a system of ethics. It is rather a groundwork for such systems. It is an attempted revindication of the spiritual nature of the world and of man, and it is with it that we are chiefly concerned.

Green's doctrine on the existence and nature of God (or the Absolute) is an integral part of his philosophical doctrine as a whole. In fact his metaphysical thought and his theological doctrine, if the term may be used, are inextricably interwoven. His belief in the existence of God, and his views as regards the nature of God, are the outcome of his metaphysical conclusions, and they can only be studied in the light of his metaphysics. If an adequate understanding of his doctrine on God is to be attained, and if that doctrine is to be objectively evaluated, it must be studied as an integral part of his metaphysic. It is not seen in all its strength, and in all its weakness, unless it is set forth as a part of his well-articulated system of philosophy.

As has been said, Green's chief concern in broaching his philosophy was ethical. The empiristic school had analyzed subjective consciousness, and had reduced the mind to a series of unrelated atomic sensations. The logic of their method compelled them to hold that knowledge is impossible. By further maintaining that man is a being who is the result of forces that are purely natural it made ethical theorizing nugatory, because life in any intelligible sense implies the existence of a personal self who knows what he should do, and who can realize his thought in action. We must know what man is and what his environment is, and then we can understand the function of man. A saving moral code can be based only on this knowledge. Knowledge there must be, and empiricism must be rejected if for no other reason than that it denies the possibility of knowledge.

Hence the method of empiricism, which consists in an analysis of the contents of consciousness, is wrong. The correct method is rather to examine reality itself, in so far as it falls within the scope of knowledge, to investigate the knowledge of reality which we indubitably possess, to scrutinize the facts of consciousness, and to find out the implications of these facts. The facts of consciousness are the only facts which can serve as a basis for a philosophical system for they are indisputable. Not only are they facts but they are valid evidence for the existence

of whatever is necessary to explain them, or for the existence of whatever is logically implied in them. They are effects and we are justified in concluding, for this is a principle beyond cavil, that the evidence for the existence of anything lies in the results which could not be accounted for without it.[3]

What must be the ontological prius of what our knowledge reveals to us as existing? The answer is: those realities necessarily exist which are necessary explanations for the content of our experience. We cannot answer the "why" of things. "The old question, why God made the world, has never been answered, nor will be. We know not why the world should be; we only know that there it is. . . ."[4] But our inability to answer the "why" does not prevent our answering the "what" and the "how." These latter can be answered if we rigidly adhere to the principle that we are justified in reasoning from effect to cause. In other words, by scrutinizing the content of our knowledge in the light of this principle we can be philosophically certain of the existence of the self, the cosmos, and God.

The Nature of the Self

The most striking characteristic of man, a characteristic which marks him off from all other things in the cosmos, is that of self-consciousness.[5] Even if we analyze the lowest act, that of sense perception, we find that it consists of a presentation to a self-conscious subject.[6] In sense perception we are conscious of facts, but our consciousness distinguishes the self which knows from the objects known, although it holds them all together in the unity of the act of perception. And what is true of sense perception is true of intellectual cognition. All knowledge consists of an ideal interrelated whole; it is the work of the mind. This is a point which Green stresses. Self-consciousness does not presuppose prior phenomena, but the fact of phenomena becoming known presupposes a preexistent self-consciousness.[7]

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[3] Prolegomena, par. 73.
[4] Ibidem, par. 100.
[5] Ibidem, par. 80.
[6] Ibidem, pars. 59 to 65; Works, vol. 1, p. 443.
[7] See Townsend, The Principle of Individuality in the Phil. of T. H. Green.

The Existence of the Cosmos

If knowledge is the work of the mind, is it not thereby unreal, as Locke and Hume claimed? Must not valid knowledge be conditioned by the reality known? Must it not be "given"? Green's answer to these questions gives us the key to his doctrine concerning the existence and nature of the universe. He maintains, in brief, that while knowledge is a subjective creation, it is, notwithstanding, objectively valid—it is a knowledge of reality and not merely a knowledge of phenomena.[8] The separation of the "work of the mind" from the real is an unwarranted separation. If we hold the work of the mind consists of an unalterable system of relations, which is not the result of capricious or arbitrary thought, we have a world which is "ideal," it is true, but which possesses the essential character of the real world—unchangeableness—and we bridge the gap between the mind and the real.

For the proof of this position Green again appeals to the verdict of introspection. Reflection tells us that we are obviously aware of a distinction between truth and error, between "mere ideas" and the real, between the subjective and the objective. Some of our judgments are necessarily true, they are both valid and unchangeable. Other judgments prove themselves to be untrue and impermanent. If we examine our erroneous judgments we find that the reason of their error is not the fact that the judgments are distinct from the reality about which they are made, but because they state certain conditions exist when de facto they do not exist, i. e., because they were not objectively determined.[9]

The universe, inasmuch as it is the object of our knowledge, is an all-inclusive system of relations. But how could such a relational system have come into being?[10] Relations are a work of the mind. But I know the relations in the world are not made by my mind, nor by minds like mine.[11] Therefore nature can only be explained by the postulation of an intelligence "which renders all relations possible and (which) is itself determined by none of them."

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[8] Prolegomena, pars. 20 to 24.
[9] Ibidem, par. 24.
[10] Ibidem, par. 28.
[11] Ibidem, par. 36.

The Existence of God

God's existence is proved by the fact that the existence of human Egos and the existence of the cosmos are inexplicable unless His existence is admitted.[12] What is the nature of the Intelligence that constitutes reality? Can we achieve a valid concept of the nature of the "what" of this Intelligence as distinct from our knowledge of His existence? "What it is we only know through it so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially and interruptedly, to have a knowledge of a world or an intelligent experience." [13]

We are warranted in predicating, first of all, the attribute of "self-distinguishing" to this Intelligence.[14] We know it is self-distinguishing because consciousness is always distinguished from the relations it effects. We are justified in attributing to it freedom from the relations it creates since the very existence of relations implies that the consciousness which causes them should not be one of the objects related. We are safe also in predicating spirituality of this Intelligence.[15] But this does not imply that it is above or beyond the world. Spirituality must be interpreted metaphorically. In brief, our knowledge of Absolute Intelligence is necessarily restricted to the facts which we can divine from our own consciousness. These facts are meager, and hence the best way of expressing our knowledge of the supreme Intelligence is through negation. He is fully what we are partially. We have as an essential trait a self-distinguishing consciousness. Hence the latter is an essential characteristic of God. "We are the Eternal Consciousness, sequestered in time and in a living organism; we are its objective manifestations, its modes, owing our existence as rational beings to our participation in the 'divine nature,' which uses the animal organism as its 'vehicle.' " [16]

Green's doctrine on the points under discussion may be summed up thus. "The unification of the manifold in the world implies the presence of the manifold to a mind, for which, and through the action of which, it is a related whole. The unifica-

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[12] Ibidem, par. 51.
[13] Ibidem.
[14] Ibidem, par. 62.
[15] Ibidem, par. 54.
[16] Prolegomena, par. 187.

tion of the manifold of sense in our consciousness of a world implies a certain self-realization of this mind in us as through certain processes of the world which, as explained, only exists through it—in particular through the processes of life and feeling." [17]

[17] Ibidem, par. 82.

CHAPTER III

Criticism of Green's System

The initial criticism of Green's philosophy may be based on the varying interpretations of his much-used phrase "unity of consciousness." The gist of his whole argument is, as we have seen, that the unity of knowledge is inexplicable except on the hypothesis of a universal consciousness. We have a unity of knowledge. Therefore there is a universal consciousness which makes our knowledge possible. An analysis of the all-important phrase "unity of consciousness" reveals that it may be interpreted in two ways. First, introspection shows me that I am an individual being, the seat of various mental phenomena, and that these latter are held together in some way—by some sort of a bond which holds together, however vaguely, the states of which I am conscious, into a unity. These states of mind of which I am aware form a unity, as I can prove from empirical evidence obtained through reflection.

The second meaning attached to this phrase is quite different. When I know things they are in cognitional contact with me, they enter intentionally into my mind, they have an ideal existence in my mind. They are objects of my consciousness, which is one, since it is mine. Since all reality that is knowable is, or can be, that of which I am conscious, since it enters into my unity of consciousness, it may also be called the unity of consciousness. In this usage the connotation of the phrase is transferred from the consciousness which knows to that which the consciousness knows. For purposes of clarity, and to conform with ordinary usage, this second meaning should be expressed as the "unity of knowledge" and not as the "unity of consciousness."

It is the second meaning which bulks large in Green's thought, and the general fallacy which underlies his position will be clearly seen if we denominate the objects of our knowledge as the "unity of knowledge" and not as the "unity of conscious-

ness." The unity of my knowledge, which is an admitted fact, is no warrant for the assertion that there is a general unity of consciousness. All that can be concluded from the fact that I have a unity of consciousness is that reality is intelligible, not that it is intelligent—or that it is a unity of consciousness in itself. It is intelligible, i. e., reality is known to me as a unified whole. The unity of the cosmos is objective, it presents itself to me, and I cognize it as such. But my knowledge of the universe is not the universe. My knowledge of the universe is a logical construction based on the experience I have of the universe, and it by no means follows that because my knowledge is in the logical order that the universe is likewise a logical and not an ontological entity. At least the identification of thought with reality cannot be urged on the premises which Green adduces. If reality and thought are identical they are not so for the reasons he alleges. All that right reason can conclude from the fact that our knowledge reveals the universe as a unity is that the universe is a unity and that it is capable of being known as such. If the conclusion is drawn that the unity of the known universe proves that the universe is an existent unitary mind, the conclusion far outruns the premises. There may be such a unitary mind which constitutes the universe, but if there is, its existence must be established on other grounds.

The rejoinder of Green to this criticism is a shifting of emphasis to the internality of relations. He submits that the categories of the mind form the connective tissue of the universe. Sensation supplies the terms which are connected, but the connecting process is the work of thought alone. Things do not, and cannot, unite themselves into a related whole. There must be some combining agency which is extrinsic to both the related terms if the latter are to be united. But nothing can enter into consciousness that is not related to consciousness; hence this combining agency is mind. The unity of nature is therefore the result of mind. The very essence of knowledge is relation—to know is to relate, and to relate is to confer on the terms of the relation whatever reality they possess.

This novel view is asserted frequently and it is urged with persistence. "Abstract the many relations from the one thing, and there is nothing. . . . Without the relations it would not

exist at all." [1] "If we suppose them (relations) to be real . . . we must recognize as the condition of the reality the action of some unifying principle analagous to that of our understanding." [2] "If there is such a thing as a connected experience of related objects, there must be operative in consciousness a unifying principle, which not only presents related objects to itself, but at once renders them objects and unites them in relation to each by this act of presentation." [3] "We can attach no meaning to 'reality' as applied to the world of phenomena, but that of existence under definite and unalterable relations; and we find that it is only for a thinking consciousness that such relations can subsist." [4] "Even if relations of any kind could be independent of consciousness certainly those which form the content of knowledge are not so. As known they exist only for consciousness; and, if in themselves they were external to it, we shall try in vain to conceive any process by which they could find their way from without to within it." [5]

Green's view on the nature of relations may be reduced to two propositions: (1) relations are the product of mind; (2) relations are internal, i. e., they are constitutive of reality.

Are Relations the Product of Mind?

The view that relations are the product of mind did not originate with Green. Its history goes back to the Kantian theory of a spontaneous, non-sensuous, active reason. Meaning, in this hypothesis, is a synthesis; synthesis is a relating, and relating requires the act of a mind. It may be admitted that meaning implies a connection. It is true that isolation makes meaning impossible. But does it follow that togetherness is but the fabrication of the mind? May not things be found together by the mind, as well as put together by the mind? [6] Pursuing the line of thought set forth above, it is not unthinkable that relations do exist extramentally—at least no valid

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[1] Prolegomena, par. 28.
[2] Ibidem, par. 30.
[3] Ibidem, p. 32.
[4] Ibidem, par. 51.
[5] Ibidem, par. 69.
[6] "The assumption that connection is only the mind's carpentry, or that it cannot be discovered in things, is a mere dogma which should never have lived." Laird, A Study in Realism, pp. 32-33.

reason can be adduced against the extramental existence. All that we can logically conclude from the fact that knowledge is a related intellectual content is that there should be relations between the things we think, and that our minds are capable of thinking these relations. To infer that these relations must exist in an absolute mind is utterly unwarranted by the premises. It may be true that relations are indices of the presence of a unitary mind, whose content they form, but this must be proved before the realistic view of relations is abandoned. The idealistic position is not self-evident, and the arguments supporting it do not beget conviction.

Green's thought in this regard, and as a whole, labors under the idealistic delusion that there can be no distinction between thought and reality because when once we think of anything outside the field of knowledge, by that very fact we bring it within the field of knowledge. The object of knowledge is necessarily "in" a knowing subject, and the latter does not and cannot become aware of a reality transcending itself. The data of our conscousness are necessarily "in" our consciousness.

The obvious answer to this position is that while it is true that the data of consciousness are "in" consciousness, it by no means follows that all reality must be "in" some consciousness. A thing can belong both to the order of ideas and to the real order, i. e., the same thing can exist and can be known to exist—it can be and be known. The perception of reality depends on a mind—not the existence of reality. Reverting to the question of the real or mental existence of relations, the mere fact that relations imply togetherness does not prove that the togetherness may not be something objectively real, and hence found, and not made, by the mind. Knowledge, after all, is knowing, not making.

An analysis of the realistic doctrines on the nature of relations will serve to clarify this point, viz., that there is nothing essentially incompatible in the concept of external relations. In the first place, a relation is not a physical nexus which joins two objects together and thus unifies them. A relation is not an entity capable of existing by itself or in something else. It is rather a reference of one thing to another—this latter being the term of the relation. It is, as Aristotle styled it, "a towards

something"—and not simply a "thing."[7] In every relation there are three elements, the subject of the relation, the term to which the subject is referred, and the ground of the relation. The latter is the cause or reason of the subject's being related to the term. It is patent that some relations belong to the purely logical order, viz., relations between concepts, and between all purely logical entities.[8]

But there are real relations also, relations which are not constituted by thought, but which are found by the mind as already existing, and which are, therefore, not a mental product. When the three elements of a relation are real, the relation is real. This conception is recognized by St. Thomas, who gives a clear-cut definition of a real relation: habitudo inter aliqua duo secundum aliquid realiter conveniens utrique.[9] Anyone who is not imbued with the idealistic prepossession that the mind is constitutive of reality and therefore of relations can not deny that two men of the same height are really equal in size, and that two men of different heights are really unequal in size, i. e., that the relations of equality and inequality are objective states of affairs which the mind does not create but which it discovers. It is futile to multiply examples because it would be but stressing the obvious. The unity of the universe, which is the result of its interrelatedness is just as objective as its variety, and there is no need to conjure up a mind immanent in the universe to account for the relations which characterize it. The realistic attitude towards relations is much more plausible than the idealistic view, and it should not, therefore, be dispossessed by the latter.

Are Relations Internal?

As we have seen above, Green maintains that the relations between the objects in the universe are parts of the things they relate. "Abstract the many relations from the one thing, and there is nothing. . . . Single things are nothing except as determined by relations which are the negation of their singleness,

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[7] Categ. 5, 1.

[8] See St. Thomas, Comment. in Sentent., 1, dist. 26, q. 2, art. 1; De Potentia, q. 7, art. 11; Summa Theologica, 1, q. 13, art. 7; 1, q. 9, art. 27, ad Iam; Coffey, Ontology, p. 332 et seq.

[9] See reference to Summa above.

but they do not therefore cease to be single things."[10] The implication of this view is that there are no such things as independent relations, and hence that relations are states of things they relate, and that they make these things what they are. Relations so penetrate and possess the terms they relate that the terms cannot be separated from the relation without losing their identity. Once the theory of internal relations is established the idealist goes on to argue that, since consciousness is a relation, it is impossible that the objects of our experience should exist apart from a consciousness. Reality loses its meaning when held to be external to consciousness. Hence, since all being is composed of relations there must exist a center of conscious experience—an Absolute Self.

The answer to this contention is that while relations may modify their terms, they do not constitute their terms, i. e., relations are external. Hence in the cognitive relations the objects of this world are independent of the Absolute. Green, as we have seen, approaches the problem of relations from the psychological standpoint. He avers that our knowledge of the relations of an object is often antecedent to our knowledge of the thing itself, and he concludes that objects themselves are subsequent to, and dependent on, their relations. But we may rejoin: the fact that our knowledge of an object is sometimes subsequent to our knowledge of its relations does not prove that the object is subsequent to, and dependent on, its relations. The order of our knowledge of relations and object has nothing to do with the ontological order.

The truth of our rejoinder is seen from the fact that we can sometimes know a relation without knowing the nature of its terms. This occurs when the relation is causal. We can, when the cause is complex, know that there is a relation of causality, without knowing what is the real cause, as distinguished from the circumstances of the causal action. But our ignorance of the cause is not a sufficient reason for declaring that the cause has not its own nature. The relation of causality between the cause and its effect is dependent on its having the nature of a cause; if it were not a cause it could not exercise causal activity.

Again, it is difficult to see how we could know a relation without knowing of the terms of the relation. This is obvious in

[10] Prolegomena, par. 28.

relations of similarity. And even in relations of dissimilarity or difference we must know something of the terms or else we could not know how they were dissimilar or different.

Green argues that unless an object had all the relations which characterize it, it would not be what it is. Unless a book, for example, had all the relations of similarity and dissimilarity to other books, and to all other objects in the universe, it would not be the book it is. Strip it of these relations and it is reduced to nothing. But we submit that the reason the book has these relations is because it is this particular, individual book. Things must be before they can be the terms of relations, since a real relation is a qualification of something real. The conception that relations are something *in vacuo*, so to speak, and that they relate nothing is quite unthinkable. On that supposition we would have a universe of relations with nothing to be related.

Applying this criticism to the all-important question of the relation of consciousness, we can conclude that things cannot be constituted by the relations they have to consciousness, i. e., they need not be thought of in order to be. The consciousness of a thing implies the existence of a thing plus its relation to consciousness. It follows that the content of consciousness as regards reality is determined, partly at least, by reality. The thing itself is not the product of consciousness, nor need it be present to consciousness to exist.[11]

The Nature of the Absolute

Thus far our criticism has been directed against the endeavor of Green to prove that the Absolute exists. In brief, the conclusion has been reached that he does not prove his point. The arguments he adduces to substantiate the existence of the Absolute are not convincing. But a further analysis of his position reveals other flaws. Waiving the question as to the validity of

[11] On the question of relations consult: Walker, Theories of Knowledge, passim; Perry, Present Philosophical Tendencies, p. 319 et seq.; The Present Conflict of Ideals, p. 373 et seq.; Spaulding, The Logical Structure of Self-Refuting Systems, Philosophical Review, vol. 19, 1910, p. 276; The New Rationalism, p. 176 et seq.; Russel, Principles of Mathematics, p. 90 et seq.; The Monistic Theory of Truth, in Philosophical Essays; On the Nature of Truth, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1907, N. S., vol. 7, p. 28 et seq.

his proofs for the existence of the Absolute, it would seem that his doctrine concerning the Absolute itself is not without fault. The weakness of his position appears: (1) in his doctrine as to the nature of the Absolute, and (2) in his doctrine as to the relations of human Egos with the Absolute.

What, in Green's opinion, is the nature of the principle which constitutes the cosmos? He is not detailed in his delineation of the salient features of the Absolute. It is the "single active self-conscious principle, by whatever name it may be called." [12] In essence the Absolute is as Green frequently styles it a "spiritual principle." It is that spirit which accounts for the existing cosmos and which by using the sentient organism of man reproduces itself in us. It is the medium and sustainer of the relations which constitute the universe; it gives to these relations their permanence and objectivity. It is an active consciousness since it accounts for the cosmos. It "makes nature." Our knowledge of this spiritual principle is necessarily meager and negative. "That there is such a consciousness is implied in the existence of the world; but what it is we can only know through its so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially and interruptedly, to have a knowledge of a world or an intelligent Experience." [13]

In the light of Green's teaching, what is the distinction between the unifying principle of the universe and the universe itself? If the universe is constituted of relations and if the work of the Absolute is to sustain these relations, what is it apart from the relations which it sustains? Green would not admit that the Absolute is identical with the world, or with the relations that are the world. But if the Absolute is merely the sustainer of the cosmic relations then what is it in itself? Is it not fair to conclude that the Absolute and the cosmic relations exist together—that as the existence of relations implies the Absolute, so the Absolute implies the existence of relations? As Balfour maintains, "We must allow that it is as correct to say that nature makes mind as that mind makes nature; that the world created God as that God created the world." [14] This

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[12] Prolegomena, par. 40; see Grieve, Das geistige Prinzip in der Philosophie T. H. Greens, passim.

[13] Ibidem, par. 51.

[14] Mind, vol. 9, 1884, p. 80.

contention directly contravenes Green's position, yet an analysis of his description of the Absolute, and of the relations between it and the world, shows that the contention of Balfour is not without force. Thus Green distinctly warns us that we must not conceive the Absolute as a "cause" of which the world is the effect. "There is no separate particularity in the agent on the one side, and the determined world as a whole, on the other, such as characterizes any agent or patient, any cause and effect within the phenomenal world." [15] "That the unifying principle should distinguish itself from the manifold which it unifies is indeed a condition of the unification, but it must not be supposed that the manifold has a nature of its own apart from the unifying principle, or this principle another nature of its own apart from what it does in relation to the manifold world." [16] All these and other texts which could be cited seem to bear out our contention that the Absolute is merely a relating consciousness. It is, in the words of Balfour, "the bare geometrical point through which must pass all the threads which make up the web of nature." [17] It is the focus of the relations which constitute the world. Such an Absolute cannot satisfy the demands of a religious philosopher. A God who is merely the sustainer of a relational cosmos cannot serve as the God of religion.[18] Essentially the Absolute is but the formal unity of the universe, with none of the richness of attributes that should and must belong to God.

The Relation of the Human Ego to the Absolute

Selfhood is a patent fact. The nature of the self may be disputed, but the fact of selfhood is indisputable. An Ego is a unique existence, which is, in the language of philosophy, impervious to other selves, impervious in an analogical sense, as matter is impervious. Our Egos are individual and personal. The texts quoted above show that in Green's thought the all-pervasiveness of the Absolute imperils the existence of human

[15] Prolegomena, par. 80.

[16] Ibidem, par. 81. See also: we must not conceive the Absolute "as a cause of which nature is the effect." Ibidem, par. 54. "The concrete whole may be described indifferently as an eternal intelligence realized in the related facts of the world," etc. Ibidem, par. 38.

[17] See above.

[18] See Seth, Hegelianism and Personality, p. 25 et seq.

personality. We are but the vehicles of the eternal consciousness. "It is this latter consciousness as so far realized in us or communicated to us . . . that constitutes our knowledge."[19] "The unifying principle of the world is indeed in us; it is our self. . . . That there is one spiritual self-conscious being, of which all that is real is the activity or experience."[20] In Green's system what becomes of my personality, which is so independent and exclusive and self-centered, that I cannot divest myself of it, even in my dealings with God? Religion lends no support to the view that I am but a mode or an adjectival efflux of God, nor does philosophy. If I am but a vehicle of the Absolute then my apparent knowledge is not mine at all; it is the knowledge of the Absolute in me. My actions are God's actions. The theist might well raise the question: what of my erroneous thoughts and immoral actions? Are they God's also? Green repudiates pantheism yet he comes perilously close to it.

Again, Green's treatment of the origin of our knowledge is very unsatisfactory. We know because there is reproduced in us the knowledge of the Absolute. He again uses the term "vehicle" to describe our relation to the Absolute from the standpoint of knowledge. How does this reproduction take place? How does our knowledge increase? Green gives no answer. There is one feature of our knowledge which Green should explain, and that is the fact that the world is made up of a plurality of things which seemingly are individual and distinct from each other. The world we experience is so constituted. Yet the real world is one—it is an interrelated cosmos whose objects are not independent. At least this is the view that Green submits. Is our knowledge an illusion? How can it be if in the knowledge process we are but "vehicles" of the Absolute? Granted that it is an illusion, then the fact that it is an illusion must be proved—and the genesis of the illusion must be traced. Green has nothing to say of this—nor have any of the idealists.[21]

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[19] Prolegomena, par. 67.

[20] Works, vol. 3, pp. 145-146.

[21] See Walker, op. cit., p. 282 et seq.; Schiller, Supplem. vols. of the Aris. Soc., II, 1919.

CHAPTER IV

The Idea of God in the Philosophy of John Caird

Closely allied to Green as protagonists of the doctrine of the Absolute are Edward and John Caird. Edward Caird (1835-1908) achieved a well-merited reputation in the philosophical world by his monumental criticism of Kant.[1] John Caird (1820-1898), a Scottish clergyman of renown, was the principal of the University of Glasgow. In 1880 he published his "Philosophy of Religion" in which he attempts to prove the existence of God from Hegelian premises. This work contains in a luminous and intelligible form the typically idealistic position on the Absolute. In it Caird reverts to a purer Hegelianism than does Green. The latter, as has been said, rests his argument for the existence of the Absolute on the structure of the cosmos, and on our inability to explain its unity without our having recourse to a synthesizing agency, whose activity we can detect in our activity. He recognizes, and attempts to account for, the duality between man and the Absolute. In the Cairds the emphasis which Green laid on this duality is shifted. Reality is rational—this is the basic proposition on which their philosophy rests. The idea of human selfhood is not stressed. The problem of duality does not receive any detailed consideration. Their desideratum is to prove that the Absolute exists, and that the cosmos is the unfolding in time of the Absolute Spirit.[2]

John Caird expounded his system of thought because of a religious motivation. Religion is not wholly confined to the domain of feeling; it also falls within the scope of human reason. The philosophy of religion, which is nothing but an effort to attain a rational basis for belief, has, therefore, a rightful place in the philosophic discipline.

[1] A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant, 1877; The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant, 1889.

[2] The systems of the Cairds as regards the existence and the nature of the Absolute are practically identical. For purposes of brevity the system of John Caird alone will be considered.

The relativists, Spencer and his school, who deny that religion can be made the object of human knowledge on the score that human knowledge is essentially relative, are in error, as an analysis of their position shows. In the first place, Spencer's theory in maintaining the relativity of knowledge, while at the same time insisting on our knowledge of the existence of the Absolute, is radically inconsistent. Logically Spencer should hold that there is no Absolute. Again, his theory is based on a false theory of abstraction. It fabricates a fictitious logical entity, and then it chides the human intelligence because it cannot think this fiction. And finally, Spencer's Unknowable does not satisfy the demands of religion. The Unknowable does not evoke the reverential feelings of awe and humility which the worship of a Supreme Being should evoke.[3]

To the objection that religious knowledge is direct and immediate, that our converse with God proves that we can have assurance for belief in the existence of God without recourse to the tedious processes of logic, Caird retorts that while it is not the business of philosophy to make men pious, yet philosophy gives us an intellectual satisfaction in religion; it places religion on a firmer basis than do the shifting sands of subjective impressions and the arbitrary notions which so often come from intuitional knowledge. Besides, the notions which come to us spontaneously through intuition must be validated before we, as rational beings, can give them credence.[4]

Caird also takes issue with those who maintain that religious truth comes to us through the channel of an authoritative revelation, and that it is, therefore, fenced off from the prehensile questionings of the philosopher. He answers that revelation does not still the activity of the human mind, neither does it thwart or quell the mind in its efforts to gain some insight into the content of revelation. True revelation is rational, and it thus invites rather than repels the mind in its endeavor to throw light on the significance of the revealed truth.

Having thus disposed of those who would deny his right to discuss a "philosophy of religion" Caird moves on to another

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[3] The Philosophy of Religion, p. 8, et seq.
[4] Ibidem, p. 39 et seq.

objective, the proof of the existence of the Absolute, and it is at this juncture that his idealism becomes apparent.

The Existence of the Absolute

Caird holds that the traditional cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments for the existence of God are inadequate.[5] These arguments possess historical value only, i.e., they are indicative of the various attempts made by the mind to reach a knowledge of God.[6] In their place he would substitute arguments which he himself has fashioned.

The conception that there is a world which is independent of thought, a world which is foreign to thought, is, as analysis reveals, impossible.[7] If such a world exists it cannot even be imagined unless it is brought into the field of thought. The very existence we might endeavor to predicate of such a world would itself be a thought. Existence, or being, is emptied of significance unless it is conceived existence or being, i.e., existence known by the mind. Even if such an independent extramental world existed we could never cognize it. To assert the contrary is tantamount to maintaining that we know the unknowable; that we know and do not know in one and the same act of cognition.

If this be so, it follows that human knowledge involves the unity of knowing and being—a unity which embraces both thought and reality. If we cannot separate, in any of our thoughts, the object thought of from the mind which thinks of it, if we cannot conceive an object apart from a mind, if subject and object are correlative of each other, there must exist a unity which lies beyond, and which is ulterior to, thought and reality. It is true that the mind distinguishes between itself and the objects of its thoughts, but this very distinction is fabricated by the mind itself, and hence it can be transcended by the mind. And when the mind transcends this distinction, when it rises to a plane of thought superior to its own individuality, then it knows that while existence can be thought away, thought cannot be thought away, i.e., thought cannot be thought as non-existing.

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[5] Caird uses the terms "Absolute" and "God" quite indiscriminately.
[6] Op. cit., p. 133 et seq.
[7] Op. cit., p. 236 et seq.

For if existence is thought away, then nothing exists. But this latter is a thought-nothing, and a nothing, therefore, which implies a consciousness as its ultimate ground. Hence all our conscious life implies the existence of a universal consciousness. All human thought is possible only on the presupposition that an Absolute Mind exists. This latter is not the product of the human mind. It is the necessary condition for human thought.

The fact that human thought demands the existence of the Absolute is not Caird's only argument. He urges another, based on the fact that human knowledge is rational, i.e., systematic and coherent. The body of human knowledge must be self-consistent—it can contain no discordant elements. The individual truths which go to make up this body of truth must be linked to each other in such a way that the sum-total of knowledge will be absolutely coherent. There can be no clash of truth with truth.

The coherence and unity which should characterize human knowledge cannot be accomplished by the use of the abstract logical method. The latter isolates beings from each other, it makes entities independent. If they are related, i.e., by abstraction, the relations linking them together are purely external and mechanical. The abstractive power of the mind does achieve a kind of unity among the objects of the universe in the formation of its general concepts, but this unity is only subjective and fictitious, since it is but a mental fiction. It does not unify extramental entities; these remain unaffected by the abstractive process.

However, the mind can conceive another kind of unity, ideal or organic unity, the idea of a unity which exists in objects and which constitutes the being of objects. It is a unity which is not a mental fiction, neither is it foreign to entities. It is rather the idea of a unity which is immanent in all unities and which constitutes their essential nature. A living organism, for example, is not merely an aggregate of its parts; it is a unity or a whole which has a new and complete entity over and above the sum-total of its parts. In other words, the universal is the ontological prius of the particular. We do not attain the notion of the universal from our knowledge of the particulars. On the contrary, it is the universal which gives us the valid notion of the particular—just as we cannot know adequately what the

functions of the parts of an organism are unless we know what the organism is.

Caird then applies his concept of organic unity to the problem under discussion, and he concludes that nature, the human mind, and God, constitute one organic whole. The interaction between nature and mind thus furnishes us the key to the solution of the relations between the mind and the Absolute.

The world of nature and the mind are not independent realities. The fact mentioned above in the preceding argument, i.e., that there are no thought-independent realities, warrants the assertion that the theory of the supposed barriers between the world without and the world within is without foundation. The theory that there is a world in separation from our minds, a world which impresses itself on our minds, and thus engenders knowledge, is erroneous. The fact of the matter is that the mind discovers the world to be rational; the world is just as rational as the mind that studies it. The laws of nature, e.g., are found to be nothing but "things of thought, rational relations, discoveries to the intelligence, that grasps them, of the treasures of a realm which is its own. . . ." [8] And furthermore, applying the concept of organic unity to mind and matter, it is apparent that they are "not two independent things but two members of one organic whole, having, indeed, each a being of its own, but a being which implies, and finds in itself a living relation to the other. . . ." [9] Nature is essentially related to mind, and mind to nature—this is the only explanation of the coherent solidarity of our knowledge. Briefly then, the supposed isolation between mind and nature is dissolved by the conception that "the organic life of reason is the . . . reality of both." [10]

The principle which unifies mind and matter also serves as the solvent of the perplexing problem of the relation of the finite and the infinite. Carrying over the theory elaborated above—that the universal is the prius of the particular, or the conception of organic unity, which is the living integration of the individuals subsumed under any universal, Caird applies it anew to the realm of religion, and he attempts to prove that

[8] Op. cit., p. 127.
[9] Op. cit., p. 238.
[10] Op. cit., p. 240.

finite spirit is intelligible only on the hypothesis of a real Infinite Spirit—the Absolute.

Just as scientific research would be nugatory if nature were not uniform, so all finite thought presupposes, and demands as a prerequisite for its own existence, the existence of an Absolute Mind. Human thinking is based on the assumption that in it and through it we gradually attain a "self-consistent whole of truth." [11] This may not be self-evident, but candid introspection into the aim of knowledge reveals the fact that "in all thinking . . . there is involved the assumption of the ultimate unity of being and thought, and that it is the end and aim of finite intelligence to realize it." [12]

What is this ultimate basis of thought, this reality which makes thinking possible? It is the Absolute Spirit whose thought is the precondition of all finite thought. The Absolute cannot be a mental fiction for it is necessary to explain the existence of thought. Its existence cannot be doubted or denied, since both doubt and denial affirm its existence. Doubt and denial are states of thought, and thought of whatever kind postulates the existence of an Absolute Thinker. Why is this? Because when we affirm a truth, this truth is relative to thought, as the argument elaborated above shows. It is evident that an affirmed truth is not relative to the thought of human minds. These latter are impermanent and contingent; their existence can be thought away. Therefore the judgments of the human mind are relative to a non-human mind, to an Absolute Thought or Absolute Self-consciousness. This is, in brief, an outline of the main proofs which Caird adduces to prove the existence of the Absolute. The question as to the nature of the Absolute remains to be considered.

The Nature of the Absolute

As might be suspected, the nature of the Absolute in Caird's thought is determined by the proofs he has given for the existence of that Spirit. ". . . The true idea of the Infinite is that which contains in it the organic relation to the finite." [13] God is to be subsumed under the category of Thought or Self-con-

[11] Op. cit., p. 246.
[12] Ibidem.
[13] Op. cit., p. 254.

scious Mind—for it is in thought alone that subject and object are one. Infinite thought, unlike human thought which is limited by the objects known, has no limitations, no finitude. Any endeavor to allocate God to other categories than that of Absolute Thought is erroneous, since in any category finiteness would be imputed to Him. Cause, for example, cannot be predicated of God because either we must conceive of Him as independent of the effect, and therefore separate from it, or else we must think of Him as a being who is not independent of the effect, but who loses His identity in the effect. If the first conception is held, God is limited by the presence of something which is not Himself; if the second is maintained we have lapsed into pantheism.

If, on the contrary, God is conceived as Absolute Spirit, or Self-consciousness, then the finiteness of the world does not delimit Him, since, while the world is distinguishable from God, it is not independent or individual to the extent that it cannot be brought back to God. The world has its own reality, which consists ultimately in the fact that it is a means of God's revelation of Himself; but this reality does not limit God in any way since "the highest realization of that being is found in the absolute surrender of any independent life, in its perfect return to God, and atonement with Him." [14]

Criticism of Caird's Philosophy

In the delineation of Caird's proof of the Absolute given above it was seen that his first argument was: the existence of the Absolute is a necessary prerequisite for the unity of knowledge and reality which is characteristic of, and essential to, human knowledge. Knowing and being are one—and their unity is explicable only on the hypothesis of an existent unitary consciousness which has unified them.

This argument, it is clear, derives its plausibility from a view that has already been discussed in connection with the philosophy of Green—the ego-centric predicament.[15] As stated above, while all reality must be "in" a knowing mind to be known, this means nothing else than that reality must be known to be

[14] See also, Fundamental Ideas of Christianity, p. 55 et seq.
[15] See above, p. 11 et seq.

known. It does not mean that reality must be known in order that it exist, i.e., it does not mean that the existence of reality depends on its being known. In maintaining this principle of idealism Caird commits the cardinal sin of which most idealists are guilty. Berkeley's "esse est percipi" principle lost its glamor when idealistic philosophers were forced to admit that the existence of realities did not depend on their being experienced by human minds. They were forced to admit that the experience of the individual, finite and fluctuating as it is, is no determinant of the existence or behavior of a material reality. But they wanted to keep the principle of relativity, and in order to validate it, they were forced to postulate the existence of a super-finite, or absolute, experience, which would be the necessary condition for the existence of reality.

This shifting of the requisite experience from finite minds to an infinite mind does not seem, however, to have rescued them from the *impassé* into which their reception of the original Berkeleian principle has led them. For if the "esse est percipi" principle proves anything it proves that the existence of reality depends on human experience. If the principle is valid the existence of the Absolute is unnecessary. If the principle is invalid there is no warrant for the belief that reality depends on any experience, finite or infinite. Berkeley's principle cannot be used to establish the fact of relativity, and then be repudiated to prove the existence of the Absolute. Such a procedure is too gross a violation of the rules of logic.[16]

Furthermore, the use of the principle of relativity, which establishes the identity of thought and reality, entails certain epistemological difficulties. The Absolute is either knowable by human minds—as Caird maintains—or it is unknowable by them. The latter opinion Caird is at especial pains to deny. If the Absolute is knowable it is part of the experience of human minds, it forms part of the content of their experience, and hence there is no ground for the conclusion that it exists outside the experience of these minds. The logical implication is that the Absolute is non-existent. If, on the other hand, the Absolute is unknowable because it falls outside the sphere of human experience, then it cannot be known to exist. It is reduced to

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[16] See Montague, Ways of Knowing, p. 334 et seq.

the status of a merely possible being whose existence cannot be verified.[17]

Absolute idealists deprecate the principle of Berkeley, and they deny that their philosophy is vitiated by the very evident fallacy it shelters. And Caird would, no doubt, do the same. It is true that most modern versions of Absolutism make the Absolute the originator as well as the knower of the universe. Most of this school have deferred to the realistic theory to the extent that they admit that knowledge, as such, does not make reality, but finds it already existing. Hence they all insist, as does Caird, that the Absolute as a knowing subject infuses or conveys its own being into the things it knows. This concession to realism—and to common sense—is a tacit admission of the fact that knowledge does not create its objects, but that it finds them already created. And if this is true of human knowledge, it is true of the knowledge of the Absolute, provided that the term "knowledge" has the same content when applied to the Absolute as it has when applied to human minds. And there is no reason for supposing that knowledge means one thing when applied to the Absolute, and something else when applied to human minds. In any event, it would seem that Caird, and his fellow thinkers, are tarred with the same stick as Berkeley. This admission is frankly avowed by a member of the idealistic school. "But the point for us is that this transcendental idealism is just Berkeleian idealism *in excelsis,* Berkeleianism universalized and applied on the cosmic scale; and the reasoning is, therefore, of the same circular character." [18]

Caird, having attempted to prove that the subject and object are united, that knowing and being are one, proceeds to argue that their unity demands the existence of a unity which is above and beyond both subject and object, thought and reality. This unity, or unitary force, is the Absolute.[19]

It is evident that this argument is but a restatement of the argument broached by Green.[20] The universe is a unity, a system, a cosmos, and therefore it implies the existence of an

[17] See Joad, Modern Philosophy, p. 10 et seq.; Rogers, Mind, N. S., XII, 1903; Schiller, Suppl. vols. of the Aris. Soc., III, 1923.

[18] Pringle-Pattison, Idea of God, p. 193.

[19] For similar positions, see E. Caird, Evolution of Religion, p. 67 et seq.; Taylor, Elements of Metaphysics, p. 87 et seq.

[20] See above, p. 13.

Absolute inasmuch as the fact of relatedness always demands the existence of a relater, which mediates between the related terms and thus relates them. The evident reply to this claim is that the assumption of a unitary, relating being is unnecessary if it be granted that the relations themselves relate, and that they alone can, and do, account for the unity which characterizes the universe. The postulate of idealism, in other words, is not necessarily true. In fact it is a mere assumption.

Furthermore, the position that without the existence of the Absolute things would be unrelated is open to the following serious objections: (a) It seems to maintain that before the Absolute began its task of relating, things would be distinct from it—even though they are the manifestation of the Absolute. Otherwise how could the Absolute relate them? The work of relating implies the existence of things to be related. (b) Not only would things be distinct from the Absolute but their distinction would imply that they would be like or unlike the Absolute, i.e., the relations of similarity and dissimilarity would exist before the work of relating was begun by the Absolute. The priority in time of these relations points to the fact that they are independent of the relater. And if some relations are independent of the work of the relating, unitary Absolute, why cannot other relations be also independent of it? [21]

It is evident that Caird's affirmation of the oneness of thought and reality is but a reaffirmation of the essential tenet of modern idealism. The simplest answer to this assertion is a direct denial of the fact—thought and reality are not one. As a modern idealist frankly admits, "After all being is not knowing, and knowing is not being; so that epistemological idealism is broken on its own wheel." [22] The catena of reasoning by which this novel identification of mind and reality is established need not be analyzed link by link. It is enough to examine the summation of this reasoning in the light of facts.

It is true that experience will yield to thought the various categories of space and time and quality, etc. From this the idealist concludes that these categories, which are merely conditions of knowledge, are identical with knowledge. And he further concludes that since reality is thought of in categories,

[21] See Spaulding, The New Rationalism, p. 332.
[22] Sinclair, The New Idealism, p. 12.

these latter are imposed by mind on reality. They unify or rationalize the cosmos; they reveal the cosmos, therefore, as mental in nature. But is not the view which holds that the categories are found in nature just as reasonable as the idealistic position which holds that they are found in the mind and imposed on nature? Knowledge, to be true, must conform to its objects; it must be determined by the reality known. And if categories exist in nature they must exist also in the mind, but only in so far as the thought of the mind is representative of reality, not in the mind as such. The realistic position which maintains that the categories of thought, and thought itself, are not numerically one with reality is to be preferred to the position of the idealists inasmuch as the idealists have, de facto, deduced the categories from the object known and not from the subject knowing. Idealists have arrived at the number and nature of the categories of thought, not by examining the mind itself but by examining the mind when the latter is under the influence of the object known, and as being determined by the object known; this in the last analysis is nothing but the derivation of the categories from the objective order. It would seem, then, that human thought is determined by something beyond itself, and that it is not fabricated independently of the action of the non-Ego upon it. If this is so, thought and reality are not one.[23]

The chief source of strength for the thought-reality identification theory is ultimately the "ego-centric predicament" which has been discussed above.[24] Enough has been said on this point, but the realistic theory may be substantiated by a brief examination of another fallacy committed by Caird and his fellow idealists in this regard. It is an implication of the solution, given above, of the ego-centric predicament. If it is true that things may be and may be known, then a reality may belong to two or more different contexts or systems without prejudice to its identity. The fields of knowledge and reality can overlap, and the field of knowledge in overlapping the field of reality does not interfere with or condition the latter. For example, the letter "e" is the second letter of the word "desk" and the fifth letter of the word "table." Its position in the first word in no

[23] See Perry, Present Philosophical Tendencies, p. 158 et seq.

[24] See p. 11; p. 27 et seq.

way interferes with its position in the second word. It has a multiple particularity, and it would be obviously incorrect to define it by its position in either of these words. Similarly, it is equally incorrect to define things as "thought" or "objects of awareness." Things are things whether they are thought of or not, and hence to define them in such a way is to sin against logic.[25]

Caird's second proof of the identification of thought and reality is that based on the conception that they are "not two independent things but two members of one organic whole, having, indeed, each a being of its own, but a being which implies and finds itself in a living relation to the other." [26] "The organic life of reason is the . . . reality of both." [27]

This, it is clear, is a derivation from the theory established on epistemological grounds that thought and reality are one. It stands or falls, therefore, with the truth of that theory. For this reason it does not demand detailed examination. But since the concept "organic whole" looms large in absolutism, it merits a brief analysis.

The concept "organism" is objectively valid, i.e., there are existents in the objective order which correspond to that concept, and which have engendered that concept. There are "organisms" in the world of our experience. No one, realist or idealist, would carp at that statement. The presentments of experience have given us an assured basis for this concept, as have the data furnished by introspection. But to transfer the concept "organism" from realities in the material world to the world at large is an unwarranted proceeding. That it is an unwarranted step is seen from the morass of difficulties into which it projects the idealist. If it be granted that the universe is an organism then it follows that the plurality of individual organisms, which were at first held to be the constituent parts of that "organism," now become the "differences" of that organism—to use the idealistic term. And this hoists the idealist on his own petard, because he has achieved the very concept of "organism" from the study of these parts or "differences." He subjected these individual realities to analysis and found that, as finite,

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[25] See Perry, op. cit., p. 126 et seq.
[26] Op. cit., p. 278.
[27] Op. cit., p. 240.

particular, and contingent objects, each possessing its own individuality which marks it off definitely from all other objects in the world, they were characterized by notes which led him to categorize them as organic. The idealist did not derive the concept "organism" from an analysis of the world in general; he derived it from objects in the world. An organism is, therefore, an individual and particular reality, possessing like all realities, the attribute of unity. It may have parts but these parts are not the organism. Hence to aver that the cosmos is an organism is to hold—equivalently—that the universe is its organic parts. This is a patent contradiction—a contradiction which idealism would disavow, since the universe is obviously not identical with its parts. In other words, if there are organisms in the universe, then the universe is not, and cannot be, an organism. And if the universe is an organism, then there are no organisms in the universe, and the very concept of "organism," since it was founded on data furnished by the realities of the material universe, is invalid.[28]

Caird's third contention is that human thought demands, by its very existence, the existence of an Absolute Mind, since human thought is based on the assumption that in thinking we gradually attain a "self-consistent whole of truth."[29] This argument, like the preceding, is a logical derivative of the identification of thought and reality. What we strive to know is reality, and reality, since it is thought, is an interrelated and unified system. Reality is coherent and systematic; it is essentially an intelligible whole. It is, therefore, the objective we strive to know, and the criterion by which the validity of our judgments must be judged. Caird has not detailed the idealistic theory of truth, but since this theory of truth is an integral part of the idealistic philosophy and since it offers a target for the shafts of criticism, a summary scrutiny of its tenets will not be irrelevant.[30]

The term "coherence" epitomizes the essence of this theory of truth. In this theory truth is an organism, a system, in which no judgment has significance if taken by itself. Each judgment

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[28] See Walker, op. cit., p. 290 et seq.

[29] Op. cit., p. 246.

[30] For a detailed account of this "coherence" theory, consult Joachim, The Nature of Truth.

is of its very nature relative, in the sense that it can be understood only if it is taken in conjunction with its context. Until human minds attain a knowledge of the Absolute, their knowledge will be incomplete and imperfect. In the meantime the cognition by human minds of any single part of the cosmos hardly merits the appellation of knowledge. This theory of truth is a consequence of the theory of internal relations, for if relations constitute objects, or if they affect the essence of objects, reality cannot be known unless all its relations are known, and this is manifestly impossible.

The coherence theory of truth is in open conflict with the dictates of common sense, and with the dictates of right reason. It can be admitted that the cosmos is an intelligible whole—that each of its parts is related to all the rest of the cosmos, and that an intelligence of a sufficiently high grade would apprehend it as such. But this admission in no way contravenes the view that if human knowledge were adequate and complete, i.e., exhaustive of the entire cosmos, the truths it now holds would still be true. Two and two would still equal four, as is now held, even if at some future time human knowledge would be all-comprehensive. There is no evidence to support the view that any intrinsic change is likely to eventuate in the case of our true judgments—in the sense that they would become false. In order to prove that such a change would take place, the idealist would have to establish the position that every relation of every reality modified and altered all its other relations to such an extent that unless the human mind could grasp all the relations of a reality, its cognition of the reality would be not only inadequate but false. And this philosophic feat seems to be beyond the power even of an idealist.[31] In other words, all thinkers except those of the idealist camp, admit that a judgment may be true, even if it does not contain or express all the truth. And when it takes its place in a larger context of truth, its truthfulness persists, as an essential element, despite the fact of its new and wider relationships.

The idealist utters a truism when he states that truth is coherent. It is clear that truth cannot clash with truth. But it is just as clear that the validity of truth is the reason of its coherence. Truths cohere because they are true; they are not

[31] See Walker, op. cit., p. 522; Rogers, What Is Truth? p. 113 et seq.

true because they cohere. Coherence, in other words, is an ideal that controls thought, but it will not serve as a criterion of the truth of thought.

The most glaring defect in the coherence theory of truth is the fact that it is self-contradictory. If an absolute mind alone can possess truth, inasmuch as it alone can comprehend all reality and its complex relationships, what right have idealists to put forth such a theory as true? In the first place, they are finite men with finite minds. Secondly, they propound this theory, which is an isolated truth, as a theory that is absolutely true. The conditions they advance as presuppositions of their theory are denied in the theory itself.

Another grave defect in this theory has been referred to in connection with the thought of Green. The existence of error in human thinking is a fact which cannot be gainsaid. In their very endeavor to supplant other systems of thought with their own system idealists imply that other systems are erroneous. Even if the error is removed, when removed to a "larger whole" the fact remains that error actually existed. The *impassé* into which idealism is impelled by its theory of truth becomes more apparent if the hazy distinction it draws between finite thinking and the Absolute Mind is recalled. If human thought is but a mode of absolute thought, then the errors of human thought must be imputed to the Absolute.[32]

Enough has been said of the philosophical basis on which Caird attempts to construct a proof of the existence of the Absolute. His thought closely parallels the similar attempt of Green, and what has been said in criticism of the latter might well be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the former.

Apart from the faulty epistemological presuppositions of Caird's system of thought, there remains for evaluation the worth of the Absolute whose existence he has essayed to establish. The outstanding defect in his conception of the Absolute is the relation of the Absolute to the universe. Caird's own account of this relation is rather obfuscated. He repudiates pantheism.[33] He avers that the Absolute is a "Consciousness

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[32] Walker, op. cit., p. 506 et seq.; Spalding, op. cit., p. 74; B. Russel, Philosophical Essays; Mind, N. S., XV, 1906; Proc. of the Aris. Soc., N. S., VII, 1907.

[33] Op. cit., p. 232-233.

transcending all that is particular and relative"; it is a "Spirit . . . whose thought is the one condition of all finite thought."[34] On the other hand we are warned against "representing God under such concepts as 'First Cause,' or 'Creator and Governor of the world.'"[35] To commit the latter fault would be tantamount to insinuating that the Absolute exists apart from the world. Putting the question bluntly, "Has the Absolute any consciousness which is not identical with the consciousness of man? Is the divine consciousness transcendent, or is it immanent in man?" Caird does not say that they are identical, but neither does he differentiate between them. The second question is likewise left unanswered. When it is considered that Caird was a clergyman, this absence of positive denial on his part is significant. Despite, then, his disavowal of pantheism, his thought lends itself to a pantheistic interpretation. Even Green, who is sympathetic to Caird's general position, indicates this lack of distinction between the divine and human consciousness as a weakness in Caird's thought.[36]

The above accounts of the thought of two of the leading exponents of idealism, both of whom approached the problem of the Absolute through the avenue of epistemology, lend color to the remark of another English thinker of an idealistic bent. ". . . It seems," writes Pringle-Pattison, "to confirm our view of the fallacious character of any direct argument from the conditions of knowledge to the theorem of an All-Thinker and of the universe as the system of his thought."[37]

Such systems do not do justice to God, neither do they do justice to the world. In the latter respect they justify Bradley's famous protest against the dissolution of the world into "some spectral woof of impalpable abstractions, or unearthly ballet of bloodless categories."[38]

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[34] Op. cit., p. 248; p. 246.

[35] Op. cit., p. 244.

[36] Green, Works, vol. 3, p. 141; see also: Benn, The History of English Rationalism in the 19th Century, vol. 2, p. 410 et seq.

[37] Op. cit., p. 199.

[38] Logic, ad finem.

CHAPTER V

The Absolute in the Philosophy of Frances Herbert Bradley

The thinker who has merited the distinction of being the most influential of the contemporary English absolutists is F. H. Bradley (1846-1924). His was a puissance that went far in shaping the course modern idealism has taken. Although he was a pupil of Green he developed his own system along original lines. He lived a life of seclusion in Oxford, prevented by ill-health from the activities of an academic career. His first book, "Ethical Studies" (1876), was dedicated to the thesis that the good is attained in the realization of the proper adjustment of the self to society. In his "Principles of Logic" he decried the idealistic interpretation of the judiciary process.[1] He also inveighed against the empirical position that judgments are nothing but a reproduction of sense-data. His chief work is "Appearance and Reality."[2] In this work he is revealed as an acute dialectician, and a profound and subtle thinker. It contains his philosophy in its definitive form. In particular it contains his doctrine on the Absolute. The novelty of the view which Bradley urged, as well as his destructive criticism of well-established philosophies, evoked a storm of discussion. Bradley took an active part in defense of his position, and the articles he contributed to the discussion were published in 1914 with the title, "Truth and Reality."

The Proof of the Absolute

Bradley agrees with his fellow idealists that the world is rational. He is explicit in the positing of the necessity of experience as a condition for existence. "We perceive on reflec-

[1] First published in 1883; 2nd edition in 1922.

[2] First published in 1891. An enlarged edition was published in 1893, 1897, and 1908. The edition of 1893 will be quoted throughout this discussion.

tion that to be real, or even to barely exist, must be to fall within sentience. Sentient experience . . . is reality. . . . For me experience is the same as reality."[3] The cleavage between him and the older idealists is marked by his substitution of "experience" for "thought." Reality is not synonymous with thought; it is synonymous with experience. Thought is essentially defective, and therefore it cannot bring the mind to a true knowledge of reality as distinct from appearance. Thought does accomplish one thing for us—it proves indisputably that the absolute criterion of truth—and therefore of reality—is the absence of self-contradiction. If mankind is to think it cannot accept self-contradiction.[4] Thought also lays bare its own impotence in its very attempt to achieve a knowledge of reality. It must, therefore, immolate itself on the altar of truth. It must abdicate its throne in favor of experience.

Why does not thought serve as a means of our knowledge of reality? Because, briefly, the concepts used by the mind in its attempted knowledge of reality are ultimately unintelligible. This thesis was first advanced by Bradley in his "Principles of Logic" and it was applied with subtle dialectic to the problem of our knowledge of reality in his "Appearance and Reality."[5]

Empiricism fails in its attempt to reduce the idea to the image. Ideas are universals. But the essence of universal ideas is meaning or content. In conceptual thought the content or meaning is divorced from existence; the "what" is separated from the "that," just as the idea is separate from the image. In the judgment the ideal or abstract content of ideas is referred to reality. Judgments are not, as has been often asserted, relations between ideas. Judgments are made about reality, not about ideas, and the reality which is the object of judgments is extramental. Judgments assert the identity of their subjects and objects, and this identity is predicated of the reality about which the judgments are made.

But while the judgment refers to reality, thought as thought is ideal, not real, and the world it fabricates is an ideal world, not a real world. Thought tries to get at reality, it aims at a knowledge of reality, but it never can, because of its very nature,

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[3] Appearance and Reality, p. 144; see also p. 145, p. 455, p. 516.
[4] Op. cit., p. 136 et seq.
[5] P. 162 et seq.

attain its goal. For thought is necessarily relational, and relational thinking is always self-contradictory. The nugatory character of thought is apparent from an examination of any of the categories which thought must utilize in forming its knowledge of the world. Consider, for example, the basic categories of substantive and adjective, and the category of relation.[6] One of the commonest judgments made is: S is P.[7] If "S" and "P" are the same thing our judgment is mere verbiage. If they are not the same thing we are contradicting ourselves. Should it be said that the judgment means "S is P" but not only "P," because "S" is also "B," then the obvious difficulty arises: how can "S" be both "P" and "B" if "P" and "B" are different? If "P" and "B" are different then the unity of "S" is destroyed; in fact "S" is replaced by two things, "P" and "B." The answer of the empiricist, who reduces a substance to the sum of its qualities, will not suffice for it projects us into the labyrinthine difficulties of the category of relation.

We constantly employ the category of relation in our interpretation of reality, but it is easily shown that relations, as we conceive them, cannot survive rational analysis. Of their very nature they are incapable of doing their supposed task, viz., the task of relation. The very idea of relation "is vitiated and contradicts itself." [8] Relations presuppose qualities, and qualities presuppose relations. Neither can be merged into, or identified with, the other. An attempt to think through the connection between relations and the qualities they relate reveals the fact that these concepts are irrational.

Relations must have terms, i.e., they must relate two entities, else they lose their character as relations. Moreover, relations, if they are relations, must relate. If relations mean nothing to the related realities, the latter are not related. But if relations are distinct from the related realities, and if they are real, then clearly we must posit the existence of something which mediates between the relation and each of the related terms, i.e., we must posit the existence of a new entity which relates the relation to each of the related extremes. This new entity must be related to

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[6] Appearance and Reality, chapters 2 and 3.

[7] That is, a substance is qualified by its properties or adjectives. To use Bradley's example: sugar is sweet.

[8] Ibidem, p. 25.

the relation, which relating requires the positing of a new relating entity. We are thus committed to the theory of an infinite number of relations. In other words, if the relation is considered to be an entity, then it is clear that A cannot be related to B by R since A must be related to R by a new relation R1; the latter in turn must be related, in turn, to R by R2, and so on.

Nothing is gained by maintaining that relations actually qualify the terms they relate. If this were so then the objects related must both be and be related. That is, the related objects both support, and are supported by, the relation. This is a patent contradiction. Again, if a relation is adjectival to only one term, it does not relate. It cannot be adjectival to both of its terms taken separately for it would not then be a relation, since both terms would be separate and therefore not united. And if the relation is affirmed to be a common property of both its terms, it is difficult to see how they are separate, and if they are not separate they are no longer two terms but one.

Bradley employs the above method in his analysis of the traditional conceptions of primary and secondary qualities, space and time, motion and change, causation, activity, the self, etc. The net result of his destructive dialectic is that our so-called knowledge has to do only with appearance. The very fact that we think about the world of appearance as we do proves indisputably that it is not the real world. Appearance is not unreal, although it is not reality. The fact of appearance, however, proves that reality exists, for appearance has no meaning unless it is the appearance of reality.

If thought is unable to put us into contact with the world of reality, are there any means at our command which will enable us to envisage the latter? The answer is that in immediate feeling-experience we come to grips with reality, or the Absolute.[9] The reason feeling succeeds where thought fails is that while thought is but a network of empty abstractions, feeling contains within itself differences, unconscious perhaps, but real, and thus it is a type of what reality is.[10] For reality is one, not because it does not include diversity, but because its very inclusion of diversity, in some way, transforms its charac-

[9] Ibidem, chapters 13 and 14.
[10] Ibidem, p. 160; p. 180-181.

ter. Everything that is is real, and as differences are, they are real.

The Nature of the Absolute

Reality, or the Absolute, is, as has been said, one. It must be one, since plurality implies relations and the latter are contradictory. But this unity of reality must be rightly understood. Reality is not a unified system possessing an adjectival unity, nor is it a system whose unity is derived from independent realities.[11] "It (the Absolute) possesses unity, as a whole, and is a single system."[12] The oneness of the Absolute does not exclude diversity; but the diversities found in this oneness are dissolved and are subsumed "into a higher concord."[13] The Absolute can have no discord within itself.[14] In it all appearances merge, and in their merging they lose, in varying degrees, their distinctive natures. In the Absolute we find the consummated accord of existence and content, of the "what" and the "that." This is what differentiates the Absolute from appearance. In the latter the seeming real is dissolved into two "jarring factors"—there is an inner discrepancy which proclaims itself to the mind.

But while the Absolute is not appearance, still in the Absolute no appearance is lost. There is nothing in the Absolute besides appearance, and every appearance qualifies the Absolute. The diversity inherent in appearance is supplemented and transformed in the Absolute. Each finite thing retains its private character but this latter is neutralized, added to, and complemented. Nothing in the Absolute is merely accessory and contingent. Neither is there any gradation of values in any of the various aspects of the Absolute. Each factor complements the others and they all are reintegrated into the final whole which perfects them.[15]

Secondly, the Absolute is experience.[16] "Sentient experience, in short, is reality, and what is not this is not real. We may say, in other words, that there is no being or fact outside of that

[11] Ibidem, p. 140-141.
[12] Ibidem, p. 142.
[13] Ibidem, p. 241.
[14] Ibidem, chapters 20 and 26.
[15] Ibidem, chapter 25.
[16] See above, pp. 37-38; also chapter 14.

which is commonly called psychical existence." [17] If reality is experience then the Absolute is sentient experience. The Absolute is a unified, all-embracing experience. Since it transcends appearance, it must, as experience, embrace "every partial diversity in concord." [18]

Our knowledge of the Absolute is, of necessity, incomplete.[19] Is the Absolute a person? If by "person" is meant experience—an experience that contains "all the highest we can possibly know and feel," an experience that "is a unity in which the details are utterly pervaded and embraced"—then the Absolute is personal.[20] But if "person" is used in its ordinary connotation, i.e., as signifying merely exclusive personality, and personality alone, not including what is both higher and lower than personality, then obviously the Absolute, because of its all-inclusive character, cannot be said to be personal.[21]

God and the Absolute

Other idealists have attempted to identify God and the Absolute. Bradley makes no such an attempt. The God of religion, he holds, cannot be identified with the Absolute. Religion implies a relation between God and man, and a relation is always self-contradictory.[22] The religious consciousness feels this contradiction and it endeavors to make God all in all. But if God is all in all He is the Absolute, and having become the Absolute He ceases to be the God of religion. "Hence short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him." [23] The most that can be said, therefore, for the God of religion is that He "is but an aspect, and that must mean but an appearance, of the Absolute." [24]

The somewhat involved system of Bradley may be summarized thus: (1) Reality, or the Absolute, reveals itself in what we conceive it to be. (2) But since no thinking as such can give us

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[17] Ibid, p. 144.
[18] Ibidem, p. 147.
[19] Ibidem, p. 548.
[20] Ibidem, p. 532.
[21] Ibidem, p. 531.
[22] Ibidem, p. 445.
[23] Ibidem, p. 447.
[24] Ibidem, p. 448.

a valid insight into the nature of reality—the inherent inconsistencies of thought prove this—we must have recourse to immediate experience for our knowledge of the Absolute. (3) The true nature of reality can be found only in a superhuman experience, in which the content of thought is preserved, but in which it is rejoined to the immediate experience which had been divorced from thought. In this experience, or Absolute, the order and coherence of the thought-world is reunited to the world revealed through experience.[25]

Criticism of Bradley's System

Bradley's insistence that reality is characterized by the unity which belongs to experience—that reality is experience—needs but a passing comment at this juncture. This tenet of his teaching is typical of, and common to, contemporary idealism, and as such it has been discussed in connection with the thought of both Green and Caird.[26] Bradley's is a full-fledged idealism, and is consequently basically unsound, if the foregoing criticisms are valid.

When Bradley argues, "We perceive, on reflection, that to be real, or even barely to exist, must be to fall within sentience," his conclusion is illicit.[27] As has been said above, existence does not imply sentience. There is nothing irrational in the conception that a reality can exist and be unperceived. It cannot be perceived without the compresence of a sentient subject, but it can exist without the presence of such a subject. All things may be perceivable, but they are not all perceived. Even granting that all reality falls within the sentience of God (or the Absolute), their existence is one thing, and the knowledge of that existence is another.

The reasons which led Bradley to embrace the idealistic position, and which in particular led him to make the striking assertion, which is so fundamental in his philosophy, "Reality is immediate experience," are unusual and original, and as such they merit analysis. The ultimate reason why "reality is experience" is because sense perception and "feeling" are intimately

[25] Evans, Bradleys Metaphysik; Gamertsfelder, Thought, Existence and Reality, as Viewed by Bradley and Bosanquet.

[26] See above, p. 37; p. 41.

[27] See above, p. 10; p. 27 et seq.

associated with reality.[28] Immediate experience is not only immediate, but it possesses the distinctive characteristics of undivided singleness and fused unity.[29] Reality also has these same qualities of immediacy, singleness, and unity, and it is, therefore, said to be immediate experience.

But in the light of introspection is experience revealed as a unity? Or putting the question more pointedly, do we find in experience a unity between the objective meaning in a datum of experience and the psychic fact of experience? It is a truism that the examination of mental states is very unsatisfactory, because of the diversity of views as to what the contents of consciousness are. But this is due to the fact that thinkers approach introspection with predetermined views. Naturally they find what they expect to find, since the wish of the philosopher, like the wish of the man in the street, is often the father of his thought. Bradley is professedly an idealist. It occasions no surprise, therefore, when the findings of his introspection in regard to the point under discussion are confirmatory of the idealistic view. He discovers, in a word, that in experience the "what" and the "that" are united, that the content of the presentation of experience and the experience, as a psychic existence, are one.

However, a dispassionate examination of the contents of experience does not seem to bear out his conclusion. It is obvious that the reality which is experienced and the content which is sensed as belonging to that reality are not separate. It is also clear that in many, perhaps in most, of our experiences, we do not distinguish the object of our experience from the sentient act by which we experience it, i.e., we do not explicitly advert to the subjective act of perception as being distinct from the object perceived. This distinction requires an act of reflection. But the fact that the mind does not make the distinction affords no basis for Bradley's view that the subjective act of perception

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[28] "The 'this' . . . brings a sense of superior reality. . . . The 'this,' secondly, has a genuine feature of ultimate reality. . . . The 'this' is real for us in a sense in which nothing else is real." Ibidem, pp. 224-225.

[29] "Both the 'this' and reality are immediate. . . . It develops and brings to unity, the distinctions it contains. But every 'this' still shows a passing aspect of undivided singleness. In the mental background especially such a fused unity remains a constant factor. . . ." Ibidem, p. 225.

and the object perceived are not distinct. As a matter of fact, the mind never confuses or identifies the two.

An analysis of the process and the content of experience shows that if we are aware of our psychic affections in an act of experience, i.e., if we explicitly advert to the fact that it is we who are undergoing an experience, then there is a clear-cut distinction between our subjective, psychic state and the existence of the reality which is experienced. On the other hand, if the fact of the subjective, psychic state does not rise to the level of consciousness, there can be no identity between this state and the content of our experience because there is only one term of the supposed identity-process of which we are aware, i.e., the content. It is difficult to see how Bradley can hold that these two are given as one. Reflection affords no ground for his assertion, and if he appeals to reflection to substantiate his position, it is only because he has read into reflection his own preconceptions.

Experience does exhibit the characteristic of unity when contrasted with the process of judgment. In the latter the subject and the predicate are differentiated, while in the former there is no differentiation of the "that" and the "what." In pure experience, i.e., experience unaffected by any thought-process, we are made aware of concrete reality. But, it must be admitted, that while the objects of experience are concrete, they are not always singular. We can, especially when it is a question of vision, experience a number of things at once. I can experience a part of nature, for instance, and while I give it one name—because I think of it as one—yet in itself it is not one. The objects which are experienced in this particular act of seeing are many, and, although they exist simultaneously, and are conjoined in a sense, they do not form a real, objective unity. The whole which they constitute is divisible beyond doubt—notwithstanding the opposite contention of Bradley.

A similar criticism can be made of Bradley's view that the presentments of experience are felt wholes. Subjectively, i.e., looked at from the psychical angle, our experiences are felt wholes, but they are so felt only after reflection. But the same reflection which tells us that our experiences are wholes subjectively, informs us also that the objects experienced are not integral parts of a whole, but that, on the contrary, they are

individual objects of a pluralistic universe. Bradley's insistence that we experience reality as a whole seems to be unfounded.[30] It has been pointed out above that before a thing can have relations it must exist.[31] Furthermore, the mere fact that our thoughts of an object transcend that object and pass on to other objects in the way of comparison and the like does not prove that these objects are parts of a greater totality or whole. The psychological fact may not adequate the physical fact, especially since those who are not imbued with the metaphysic of idealism find no reason in the data of their experience for the view that we experience wholes. To them reality is experienced as plural and individual, despite the fact that their thoughts about reality tend to go beyond the objects experienced. This latter they explain by the purposive, functional nature of thought. Thought, being what it is, naturally tends to other objects, but it is only the thought which unites or relates objects. The objects themselves remain unaffected by the thought-process; they remain as single, individual units of reality. Bradley's interpretation of the data of experience in his endeavor to establish his central tenet, that "reality is experience," is, then, apparently vitiated by his idealistic leanings. In spite of his dialectical acumen he has prejudged the issue, and he has shaped the facts of introspection to make them subserve his theory.[32]

Finally, Bradley's position that we are in cognitional contact with reality in sense perception alone, and that the universe is, as it were, an enlargement of this point of contact, needs clarification. In the first place, this statement may mean that my experience is an integral part of reality, and that, therefore, this is the only reality with which I am, in all truth, identified. It may mean, however, that only by means of, and in connection with, perception I can come to know anything of the universe. The prior meaning would imply that the world of which we are made aware through perception is continuous with the perception itself. This would confirm Bradley's view that "reality is experience," but the above distinction dissipates the

[30] Ibidem, pp. 176-177. "It (the present object) has always edges which are ragged in such a way as to imply another existence from which it has been torn, and without which it does not exist."

[31] See above, p. 15 et seq.

[32] See Walker, op. cit., chapter 4; Ward, Bradley's Doctrine of Experience, Mind, N. S., XXXIV, 1925.

truth-claim of this position. Experience is a reality, it has its place in the universe, but it is not the reality of the universe. It is rather the means or vehicle of our knowledge of the reality of the universe.

Bradley's Theory of Judgment

Bradley's strictures against the judgment have been indicated above. His charge that the judgment separates the "what" from the "that" is true, since judgment involves an analysis of the data of experience into a subject and predicate, the former being the "that," the "existence," or the "fact," while the latter is a "what," a "content," or an "idea." The predicate is not merely a psychical fact, but it is rather a quality which is attributed to reality. But does this give Bradley the right to invalidate the claims of judgment to be a true interpretation of reality?

Thought, it is admitted, works on the material presented to it by experience. It does not add extraneous elements to the data of sense, neither does it read into them distinctions or elements which are not there. On the contrary, it is the function of thought to seize on the intellectual elements contained in experience and to intellectualize them, i.e., to think them in an intellectual way. Thought conceives what the senses perceive. Consequently, if thought finds distinctions in the material presented to it by sense experience, the basis or ground of those distinctions must have been, latently at least, in the matter of experience. If, therefore, in the product of thought, viz., the judgment, objective existence or content is distinguished from the psychical existence of thought itself, it is because the distinction between the two has its basis in sense experience. Introspection bears out this assertion. For it tells us that in all our experience, as well as in our thoughts, there is a clear distinction between the subject and the object, between the percept or the concept and the object of the percept or concept. This distinction is characteristic of all cognition and it cannot be gainsaid.

Bradley, like all those who depreciate the value of the judgment, should bear in mind that the judgment is one of the most important means we have for apprehending reality, and that if reality is not what we judge it to be, philosophy and science and

all forms of coherent thought are but a perilous emprise. Systems of thought are but concatenations of judgments. Consequently, a system of thought, which is ultimately but a congeries of judgments, cannot impugn the validity of judgments. Bradley holds that his logic must assume as true what his metaphysic forces him to reject.[33] Consistency seems to demand that one cannot be simultaneously loyal and disloyal to logic, even for the sake of one's metaphysics.

Substantive and Adjective

Closely linked with the topic of the nature and function of the judgment is the Bradleian treatment of the categories of substantive and adjective, or substance and accident. This topic is worthy of discussion both because Bradley has used his solution as a weapon against the validity of intellectual knowledge in general, and against the worth of the judgment in particular, and because it has been made much of by neo-Hegelians as disproving the Aristotelian logic of identity. In brief the objection is this: the judgment, "S is P," both identifies "P" with "S," and it also implies a diversity of "P" from "S." If "P" is the same as "S," "S is P" only means "S is S." If "P" is different from "S" then "S is P" means "S is not S." Hence the plea on the part of modern logicians, following the lead of Bradley, for a more dynamic logic to replace the static logic of Aristotle, and hence also the contention of Bradley that the concepts of substantive and adjective are contradictory.

In every thought-object there are two different kinds of notes; these may be styled intrinsic and extrinsic notes. By the former is meant those notes which are singular or exclusive, in the sense that they do not involve other objects in their meaning. Extrinsic notes are those whose content involves the existence of other objects. To illustrate: in the judgment, "A baseball is round," the adjective "round" can belong to the baseball without belonging to any other object. But in the judgment "Mount Vernon belonged to George Washington," it is clear that I am predicating something of the subject of this judgment which would be meaningless unless there were another object, viz., George Washington. The subject of this judgment is not only

[33] Principles of Logic, p. 502; p. 506.

an object but it has in the above judgment a relation to another object. Extrinsic attributes are possessed, then, by an object and by other objects, but in another way. For example, "belonged" is related to "George Washington" as subject, but it is related to "Mount Vernon" as an object. The object has, as a rule, many relational attributes, and these latter taken together differentiate it from other objects and thus give it its singularity of denotation. The intrinsic qualities of a thing make up its essence, which essence may be common to other things. But while the latter things are similar, i.e., they have similar essences, they are not identical. The extrinsic qualities belong to the thing alone; they can not be predicated of any other object.

Designating the intrinsic qualities of an object as its "connotation," and the extrinsic attributes as its "denotation," it may be affirmed, as has been said, that every object has a connotation and a denotation. It is the object's denotation which has to do with its relation to other objects, and it is the denotation which gives the object its place in a system or series —the connotation placing it in a class or genus. Hence if two objects are members of the same genus they have the same connotation. If two objects have the same denotation they must possess the same extrinsic qualities in a different way.

With the above distinction in mind it is seen that the identity expressed between the subject and predicate of a judgment signifies an identity of connotation possessed by objects with different denotations. In other words, the identity between the "S" and "P" of the ordinary judgment is partial. In some judgments, e.g., as in the judgment, "This sweet sugar is this sweet sugar," the identity asserted by the copula is complete. But in other judgments, such as "This sugar is sweet," the identity is not complete, because sweetness is identical with only one of the qualities of sugar, while sugar is identical with only one of the class of sweet objects. From the standpoint of the denotation of the subject and predicate, the class of objects to which the subject belongs is contained within the class of objects to which the predicate belongs. When both the subject and predicate are used connotatively the judgment means that the quality expressed by the predicate is one of the qualities belonging to the subject. Briefly, the identity between the subject and the predicate, expressed by the copula, is an identity of denotation, while

the diversity of the subject and predicate is connotative. Which is to say, that the "lump of sugar" instanced by Bradley "can be both white and hard without mitigation on the one hand of the eternal diversity of sweetness and hardness, or on the other hand of the complete denotative identity of the sugar itself." [34]

The Nature of Relations

The intricate question of relations has been dealt with in the preceding pages. The realistic theory, the theory of external relations, was there succinctly explained. Bradley, like Green, denies that relations are external. The reasons which led both these thinkers to the same conclusion are, however, diverse. Green noted that the relations of objects were often known before the objects themselves. He hastened to the conclusion that objects are subsequent to, and dependent on, their relations, just as they are subsequent to the latter in knowledge. Bradley, like Green, approaches the subject of relations from a psychological standpoint, but he, because he notes that the relations and the objects they relate often come into consciousness at the same time, holds that the relations and the related terms presuppose one another, and that they imply the existence of an Absolute from which they have emerged. He maintains, moreover, that the intellectual concept of a relation which is external to the objects it relates is self-contradictory.

In dealing with the thorny question of relations we should guard against the fallacy of considering only one kind of relations as typical of all the various classes of relations. The tactic of modern idealists is to center the attention on such kinds of relations as give plausibility to the view of the internality of relations. A note of a symphony is not a part of a symphony if it is taken in isolation from that symphony. So too, a bodily organ, separated from the body, is literally a different thing from the same organ occupying its rightful place in the body, and acting with the other organs of the body. We can admit, however, that where a unity of end is in question, this latter does fuse with, and influence, the related terms, in so far as they are

[34] Montague, The Ways of Knowing, p. 84; see p. 78 et seq., for the whole argument. See also, Walker, op. cit., p. 366 et seq.; Stout, Proc. of the Aris. Soc., III, 1903.

integral parts of that unity. A note of a symphony must be in a symphony if it is to be a note of a symphony; otherwise it is merely a note and not a symphonic note. But even in this instance the relationship which it has to the symphonic whole does not make it a note but merely a symphonic note. However, there are other relations in which the internality is very difficult to discover, and these must be taken into account if an adequate concept of the nature of relations is to be achieved. Would not green, for example, be green, even if it should not have the relations which it de facto has to other relations?

Bradley's devastating criticism of relations is irrelevant as far as the Aristotelian doctrine of relations is concerned. Moreover, an analysis of his theory reveals the fact that, despite its ingenuity, it is not irrefragable. The fundamental assumption of his criticism of relations is his belief that "reality is sentient experience." He views relations from the idealistic standpoint. This at once debars him from a proper appreciation of the view he attacks. If, however, his basic assumption is groundless, then his criticism of relations is ineffective and inept.

Much is made, for example, of the argument that relations as we conceive them require an infinite series of relations mediating between the relations and the terms related. If a relation relates, and that seems to be the basic and essential characteristic of a relation, it does not need another relation to relate it to its terms. A relation relates—it is not related. Why then require the intercalation of intermediary relating agencies?

As to Bradley's statement that qualities and relations mutually presuppose each other, the reply is made that he misconceives the nature of a relation. The relation does not create the quality; the latter is rather the ground or the reason of the relation. When a quality is compared with something else, or when it is considered in relation to something else, then a relation between it and the other quality or object exists. A detailed examination of Bradley's doctrine on relations cannot be given here. Perhaps it is best refuted by a statement of the realistic theory of relations—which has been given above.[35] It has occasioned much dispute and evoked much criticism. All anti-idealistic thinkers reject it absolutely. James writes of it, " 'External relations' stand with their withers all unwrung, and

[35] See p. 14 et seq.

remain, for aught he proves to the contrary, not only practically workable, but also perfectly intelligible factors of reality." [36]

The Absolute and Finite Selves

Any form of Absolutism, any theory which maintains that the ground of reality, or reality itself, is a unitary being, must explain the apparent plurality and diversity exhibited by the universe that we know. This is a perennial difficulty for Absolutism—the existence of things. In the examination of Bradley's system in this regard, attention will be centered, not on the plurality of things in general, but on the plurality of human minds, or as Bradley styles them, "finite centers of experience." The existence of finite centers is admitted by Bradley, although the "why" of their existence is unanswerable. "The fact of actual fragmentariness, I admit, we cannot explain. That experience should take place in finite centers, and should wear the form of finite 'thisness' is in the end inexplicable." [37] Bradley disclaims the ability to explain why there are finite minds, but he should be able to answer questions which have to do with the implications of his view. If the knowledge of finite centers is but appearance, and if the Absolute alone is real, then where is the delimiting principle which is the cause of these finite centers, which know things as they are not, to be allocated? It will not do for Bradley to reply that this question is unanswerable on the plea that the answering of it requires an absolute knowledge, i.e., a knowledge which presupposes the permutation and destruction of finite knowledge. Such a reply would be an evasion, for the question to be answered is: what prevents finite knowledge from being real knowledge? It seems as if the Absolute cannot be the reason of this since for the Absolute nothing can be appearance, and if there is no appearance for the Absolute, then for whom is appearance? It would appear that to explain this difficulty Bradley must postulate

[36] Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 108. See also Hobhouse, Theory of Knowledge, chapter 12; Schiller, Humanism, Essay 11; Stout, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, N. S., II, 1902, p. 1; MacLennan, Journal of Phil., Psych., and Sc. Methods, vol. 1, 1904, p. 403 et seq.; Walker, op. cit., p. 269 et seq.

[37] Appearance and Reality, p. 226; see also, p. 511; p. 527.

the existence of a principle external to the Absolute, and in that event the Absolute ceases to be the Absolute.[38]

Approaching this question from another angle, there cannot be the knowledge of appearance unless there are finite centers which have this knowledge of appearance, and this because the knowledge of the Absolute is absolute knowledge. Finite centers, therefore, exist, even if their existence is appearance and their knowledge is a knowledge of appearance. But the whole trend of Bradley's thought is towards the abolishing of these centers. Their existence is appearance only, and unreal from the standpoint of the Absolute. "It may be instructive to consider the question (of souls) from the side of the Absolute. We might be tempted to conclude that these souls are reality, or at least must be real. But that conclusion would be false, for the souls would fall within the realm of appearance and error. They would be, but, as such, they would not have reality. They would require a resolution and a recomposition, in which their individualities would be transmuted and absorbed. The plurality of souls in the Absolute is, therefore, appearance, and their existence is not genuine." [39]

Might not Bradley be charged with the hoary fallacy of arguing in a circle? He admits that experience takes place in finite centers—that all knowledge rests on the basis of our individual experience.[40] These centers are not only personal, they are exclusive and individual. Yet he straightway proceeds, arguing from the experience of these finite, individual centers, to prove that they are not really individual and personal; they are rather adjectival modes of the Absolute. If they are finite centers, they are not modes of an Absolute; and if they are personal and individual, independent and subsistent, they are not adjectives of the Absolute. Individuals are not adjectival to other things.

An exhaustive criticism of Bradley has not been attempted. A few of the more apparent weaknesses of his philosophy have been indicated, and these criticisms, if linked with the criticisms of idealism in general, which have been given in preceding pages,

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[38] Rogers, English and American Philosophy, p. 257.

[39] Appearance and Reality, p. 304 et seq.

[40] "And so, in the end, to know the universe we must fall back upon our personal experience." Ibidem, p. 260; see also, p. 225.

will be sufficient. It is one of the ironies of the neo-Hegelian movement that while it had its inception in an endeavor to bolster up the cause of a declining religion, it produced as its finest flower "Appearance and Reality," a book in which God was dethroned, and in which religion was declared to be valueless.

CHAPTER VI

The Idea of the Absolute in the Systems of Bosanquet and Pringle-Pattison

The philosophy of Bosanquet (1848-1923) betrays the influence of Bradley tempered by Hegelian panlogism. Bosanquet places more trust, than does Bradley, in the ability of the speculative reason to attain a knowledge of reality. He presents his thought mantled with a rich profusion of incidental detail; he seeks his data in wide fields—science, literature, art, sociology, politics, and religion are all summoned to aid him in the establishing of his thesis. He disclaimed the application of the term "idealism" to his philosophy, and he had sympathies with epistemological realism.[1]

The Proof of the Absolute

Bosanquet holds with Kant that knowledge is a synthetic process—it is a thinking-together of the data of experience. The universal principles, which are involved in the thought-process, are inherent in the nature of the Real which reveals itself in experience. All our experience, he avers with Hegel, of whatever kind, must contribute to the thinking process if we are to attain a full knowledge of the Real.[2]

Thought is, however, controlled by reality, it is the control of a thought-process by a real object, and the so-called laws of the mind, the laws which determine the succession of our thoughts, are, therefore, laws of the reality which is thought. The deeper the sense of conviction resulting from our knowledge the more we feel under the compulsion of the object thought. Hence the object is what we think it to be.

[1] See his, The Principle of Individuality and Value, p. 47; Logic, 2nd ed., vol. 2, p. 276, p. 301, p. 309; The Meeting of Extremes in Contemporary Philosophy, passim; consult also, Cunningham, Phil. Review, XXX, 1926, and Carroll, ibidem, XXIX, 1920.

[2] The Principle of Individuality, chap. 3, 4; chap. 4, 1-4; chap. 7, 3.

The extent of a mind's knowledge, and the manner in which a mind articulates its knowledge, depend largely on its intercourse with other minds. Human minds establish cognitional contracts, they act and react on each other. From this social meeting of minds there arises a condition, "in which the constituent elements of them all are modified into members of the new and common mind which arises." [3] Our social environment moulds our views; the social organization in which we live shapes our beliefs. Not only does our present environment control our thinking, but we are guided by the social heritage that comes down to us through the ages, precipitated and solidified in the sciences, religion, philosophy, and in all fields of knowledge. Our thoughts are controlled by the truths of the past that have been handed down to us.

As we trace the growth of human knowledge which is steadily moving on towards its objective, i.e., complete knowledge of reality, we see that it was not planned by any one mind, nor by all minds in concert. The present advanced state of civilization, the mastery we exercise over the world through applied science, the progress that has been made in philosophy—all of these are the result of minds thinking in particular situations without a prevision of what the outcome of their combined thinking would be. As we look backwards towards the receding horizons of history we see giant patterns of development which have determined and controlled the thoughts of men. "Neither Christianity nor the coral reef were any design of the men or insects who constructed them; they lay altogether deeper in the roots of things." [4] The mind which attains to this conception can see that it is but an appearance of the Absolute.

Furthermore, "The Absolute is simply the high-water mark of fluctuations in experience, of which, in general, we are daily and normally aware." [5] Our minds are microcosms inasmuch as they reveal to us cross-sections of the whole in the constant nisus of their contents to articulate themselves into a complete whole. Reflective minds, in their endeavor to think through the data of sensation, must yield to the demand of a systematic all-inclusiveness—they must seek a consistent explanation of the

[3] The Principle of Individuality, p. 373.
[4] Ibidem, p. 155; see also chapter 4.
[5] Ibidem, p. 378; see also chapters 7 and 10.

whole, and in this they are under the control of the real. This tendency of the mind towards a knowledge of the whole is not a psychological trait; it is rather something forced on the mind by the content of that which is known, i.e., reality. Thus the tendency towards coherence, comprehensiveness, and all-inclusiveness of knowledge is a proof of the coherence, comprehensiveness, and all-inclusiveness of reality, or the Absolute. In fact, we meet the Absolute at every turn if we would but take the trouble to discern its presence. "A careful analysis of a single day's life of any fairly typical human being would establish triumphantly all that is needed in principle for the affirmation of the Absolute." [6]

Bosanquet's thought on the Absolute is a sustained commitment to the view that reality is a coherent whole expressing itself in its every part. He condemns as radically wrong all philosophies which attempt to split reality up into its component parts. The correct methodology is to take the whole as the starting point of thought and to harmonize the apparently discordant elements of reality with the whole. The only clue to an understanding of reality is the whole—not the part.

The Absolute and God

In his earlier writings Bosanquet inveighed bitterly against the conventional creeds of religion.[7] In his maturer thought, however, his revolt against Christianity lost much of its acerbity. But he never went so far as to identify positively the God of religion with the Absolute. Even in his latest works he uses the term "God" only diffidently and with a certain malaise. In fact the religious dogma that there is an infinite personal God who is transcendent to finite souls is self-contradictory.[8] A person cannot be infinite. The term "existence" is a misnomer when applied to two separate finite beings. "The conclusion is, in a word, that the God of religion, inherent in the completest experience, is an appearance of reality, as distinct from being the whole and ultimate reality; a rank which religion cannot consistently claim for the supreme being as it must conceive him." [9]

[6] Ibidem, chapter 7, passim; see also, pp. 23-24, p. 37, pp. 267-268.

[7] See his "Essays and Addresses."

[8] The Value and Destiny of the Individual, p. 254.

[9] Ibidem, pp. 255-256. See also chapter 5; Carroll, Phil. Review, XXX, 1921.

Criticism

A detailed criticism of the thought of Bosanquet would involve a restatement of much that has been said in preceding pages. Hence the exceptions taken to his theory, as well as those taken to the theories of those idealists who will be subsequently discussed, will be directed against those difficulties alone which are peculiar to these systems.

The core of Bosanquet's philosophy, the conception that a systematic whole is the goal of philosophy, is not without a measure of truth. We cannot know finite realities fully without comprehending the relations which link them to other realities. The statement that the more we know about the relations of a reality, the more we know about the reality, is a truism. And the view that the more we know about the interrelations of things which constitute the cosmos, the more we know about the cosmos, is equally incontrovertible. But what is the nature of this whole which is formed by the interconnections of finite realities? This whole may be a whole made up of finite beings plus their relations, or it may be the Absolute Whole, as Bosanquet claims. Whatever the answer may be, it must be arrived at empirically; an a priori answer will not do. The fact that there is a whole is, of itself, no warrant for the designation of the character of the whole. The question of the nature of the whole can be settled only by an appeal to the facts. And to one who is not under the spell of idealism the facts do not bear out Bosanquet's contention. It is a commonplace that facts are always interpreted in the light of one's philosophical prepossessions. If Bosanquet, and his fellow idealists, expect to find the Absolute postulated by the facts of their finite experience, if they look for the Absolute in those facts, they will find it in those facts. However, there are many other philosophers outside the idealistic fold, and these cannot detect the easily-found Absolute in the facts of experience. These latter maintain that observation and analysis of experience afford no evidence for the existence of the Absolute. And they point out the hazardous nature of the idealist procedure in their a priori interpretation of facts.[10] As a matter of fact, the data of experience are clearly against the existence of the Absolute. Its existence is invoked

[10] See, e. g., Russel, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

only in answer to certain logical and, we believe, fictitious, necessities.

Thought demands that reality can be fully known only in case we suppose the disjecta membra of reality to merge into a significant whole, which unites them in a plan and thus gives them a meaning. But, granting that the Absolute is a desideratum of thought—which is a controvertible point—does it follow that this desideratum of thought should be satisfied? Can the desiderata of finite minds, any more than the volitions of human wills, impose their laws on the universe? Bosanquet would answer "yes," but his affirmation has more of the nature of an act of faith than a statement based on reason. Perry does not exaggerate when he writes, "The report which science renders of the brutal facts of experience may be ignored in the name of a higher authority. . . . In absolute idealism facts as something externally imposed on the mind drop out altogether. . . . Knowledge is affirming what one's rational constitution requires." [11]

An example of the violence done to facts consequent on the postulation of the existence of the Absolute is apparent in Bosanquet's solution of the problem of the relations between finite souls and the Absolute. He varies in his treatment of the status of the finite soul. He admits that souls are formally distinct, despite the fact that each of them, "like everything else in the universe, is now and here beyond escape an element in the Absolute." [12] The formal distinction and plurality of finite souls cannot, of course, be denied in the face of the fact that experience is private and individual.[13] Still the nature of the distinction between souls is not "wholly fundamental and irreducible." [14] In fact, this distinction has a "precarious and superficial nature." [15] The proof of this is the fact that the mental contents of every finite self are shareable by the other finite selves which constitute society. In sharing the content of the common thought of our social interests, such a philosophy, science, and art, the individual finite soul becomes one with his

[11] The Present Conflict of Ideals, p. 230.
[12] Value and Destiny, p. 257.
[13] Ibidem, p. 47.
[14] Ibidem, p. 48.
[15] Ibidem, p. 54.

fellow finite souls. He participates in the common thought of his fellow men and in a very real sense merges himself with them.[16] The cleavage between souls is, therefore, "reacted on and impared" by this "overlapping of content." Hence the soul is, in reality, merely a phase of social experience; it has no existence of its own. Its finiteness means nothing but limitation and powerlessness.[17] Just as a philosophical theory is absorbed by a more complete theory, so is the finite soul absorbed in the "truer" self of the social whole.[18]

This view of the self as a mere phase of a logical whole is at a far remove from our conviction as to the nature of the self. One may hold that the self is not an exclusively individual being in the sense that it is a being which acts on, and which is acted upon, by the social habitat in which it lives, and yet be not driven to the extreme view that it is in its very essence merely a part of the social organism. Bosanquet, in his eagerness to make souls adjectival to the Absolute, has overlooked the truth that the distinction of souls is not affected in any degree by their common knowledge. The fields of knowledge of different souls may overlap without their existences doing the same. If there is any knowledge of which finite souls are convinced it is that they are finite and separate and individual. They are primarily individual and only secondarily social. They are participants in social knowledge because they are distinct centres of experience. If there were not distinct centres of experience there would be no "social" experience. The latter is at best a mere abstraction apart from the experience of individual minds.

Bosanquet seems to deny the idea of selfhood in the sense in which that term is ordinarily used. This is a patent contradiction of the facts of experience. His position is achieved by the tendency referred to above—his overweening desire to prove the existence of the Absolute. The incontrovertible fact of centres of experience with which he began his speculation was gradually reasoned away, as it must have been, if his desideratum, the existence of the Absolute, was to be established.[19]

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[16] Ibidem, p. 49 et seq.
[17] Ibidem, p. 56.
[18] Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 18, p. 503.
[19] See Leighton, An Estimate of Bosanquet's Philosophy, Phil. Review, XXXII, 1923. See also, Pratt, Matter and Spirit, p. 205.

Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison

The balanced thought, presented in untechnical form, of this distinguished scholar, who for so many years graced the faculty of the University of Edinburgh, has won for him a wide popularity as an exponent of absolutism. Few, if any, of the modern statements of this creed have won the acclaim that he achieved in his "Idea of God." In his earlier writings, and especially in his "Hegelianism and Personality," he is apparently at variance with absolute idealism. He rejects the idealistic epistemology in favor of the realistic position, and he inveighs against the monopolistic tendencies of absolutism—monopolistic in the sense that it tends to nullify the individual in its stressing of the Absolute. However, in his maturer thought, he embraces absolutism whole heartedly. His system is in many respects an analogue of the system of Bosanquet.

Pringle-Pattison believes that Kantianism fails to give a satisfactory theory of reality because of the hiatus it establishes between the subjective and objective orders. The "lower" naturalism has failed in a similar attempt because it is a misinterpretation of reality. Its scope is too restricted, embracing, as it does, only a part of reality.[20] Naturalism through its researches in biology and kindred sciences has contributed one important truth which aids us in the solution of the problem of the nature of reality, viz., the fact of the continuity in the world we know. It has closed up the gaps formerly thought to exist between the various grades of being. It has provided us with fruitful category of continuity, with which we can essay a new interpretation.

The intelligence of man, together with man himself, is organic to the universe. And since the estimate of any power can be acquired only by an examination of the entire process through which the power works, we must take man and his knowledge into account if we are to know adequately the power which is responsible for them. That is to say, the evolutionary process, so evident in the world, must be estimated in the light of its highest and last term, which is man and his mind. All ultimate explanations must take the end for which, or towards which,

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[20] The Idea of God in the Light of Modern Philosophy, 2nd ed., lecture 2.

into account.[21] If man is organic to nature then the view that he is simply the spectator of a closed and complete system of nature must be rejected. "The intelligent being is rather to be regarded as the organ through which the universe beholds and enjoys itself." [22] This view does away with the difficulty of the mentalistic and relativistic strain, found in the older idealists, and which is openly contrary to facts.[23]

The criterion which Pringle-Pattison uses in proving the existence of the Absolute is that of Bradley and Bosanquet—self-consistency.[24] Reality must be that which satisfies our nature. Our chief desires, the desire for truth, and life, and beauty, and goodness, must be found realized in the Absolute. In a word, man's ideals, which are revealed fragmentarily in his experience, must be objective and real; they must have their ground in the Absolute. It is "from the ideals present and operative in man's life that we draw our criterion of value, and, at the same time, our conviction of the nature of the system in which we live." [25]

Whence come these ideals which intrinsically shape man's life? They have not been fabricated by man himself. They come from the Absolute, just as man himself has the Absolute as his source. "The presence of the Ideal is the reality of God within us." [26]

Another argument for the existence of the Absolute, or God, since Pringle-Pattison uses the terms quite indiscriminately, is that based on the contingent character of our world. The finiteness and imperfection of the contingent demands the infinitude and perfection of the Absolute as its ground.[27] The finite facts we know are mutable and unstable; the mind sees that it must account for them as appearances of a reality which is everything they are not. Especially are our religious experiences imbued with objectivity. The ideals which they indicate are objectively valid. "Hence the ideal is precisely the most real thing in the world; and those ranges of our experience, such as religion, which are specifically concerned with the ideal . . . may reasonably

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[21] Man's Place in the Cosmos, pp. 11-12.
[22] Idea of God, p. 211; p. 235.
[23] Ibidem, lecture 10.
[24] Ibidem, lecture 12.
[25] Ibidem, p. 243; see also The Philosophical Radicals, p. 97 et seq.
[26] The Idea of God, p. 246.
[27] Ibidem, lecture 13.

be accepted as the best interpreters we have of the true nature of reality." [28]

The Absolute is immanent in the universe. All theories of transcendence overlook the experienced fact that the infinite is in and for the finite, just as the finite is in and for the infinite. There is no reason to suppose that God exists out of relation to the world.[29] Considered apart from His creatures God becomes an abstraction, while apart from God creatures lose their existence. The only transcendence that can belong to God is a transcendence of quality or value. The life of God is infinitely richer and infinitely greater than is the life of any finite being. There is no ontological transcendence of God from finite reality. When souls come into being they are not separated from God for "the filaments which unite the finite spirit to its creative source are never severed. The Productive Reason remains at once the sustaining element of the dependent life, and the living content, continually offering itself to the soul which it has awakened to the knowledge and the quest of itself." [30] In essence, God is the process of self-communication, or self-realization, in the act of which time is transcended.[31]

What is the status of human persons in this deified universe? Pringle-Pattison thinks that Bosanquet emptied them of their individuality. Hence he tries to construe the fact of their individuality in such a way that it will square with his doctrine on the immanence of God.[32] He is outspoken in his condemnation of the belief that persons are self-subsistent beings, living out their own lives. The "mere individual nowhere exists; he is the creature of a theory." [33] A self can exist only in relation to an objective rational world, which world gives the self its content, and of which world it is the focus, the organ, or the expression. The conception that souls are "solitary units," extrinsic to God, is impossible.[34] The pulse of the life of the Absolute courses through the soul. The fact of progress, so stressed by Bosanquet, is inexplicable except on the theory that the richer life of

[28] Ibidem, p. 252.
[29] Ibidem, pp. 214-215; 314-315.
[30] Ibidem, p. 255.
[31] Ibidem, p. 315; see also lecture 16, passim.
[32] Ibidem, lectures 14 and 15.
[33] Ibidem, p. 258.
[34] Ibidem, p. 259.

the Absolute is indwelling in the individual soul. Individual souls are distinct from one another, they are unique, because the focalization of the Absolute in them is never the same in any two souls.[35] Our finite centres of experience are not mere automata—they have their own minds and wills. Nevertheless they "must enter into the divine experience in a way for which our mode of knowing hardly furnishes us with an analogy." [36]

Pringle-Pattison admits that his conception of God contravenes the popular conception of the Deity. The inconsistencies of the latter reveal themselves to philosophical analysis.[37] God cannot be aloof from the world. The essence of God is His self-communication to creatures. This process is not merely a fact; it is rather an act, "a continuous life or process which is perpetually being accomplished." [38]

Criticism

The absolutism of Pringle-Pattison fails to answer many of the objections which its opponents level against it. With his characteristic candor he admits this. "How this real system of externality . . . is related to or included in an absolute experience, is necessarily dark to us." [39] "To understand the process of such creation is necessarily beyond us; we can barely describe its phases without involving ourselves in contradiction." [40] "It is, I say, in the nature of the case, impossible that we should understand, or be able to construct for ourselves, the relation in question." [41] The relation in question is the relation between the freedom of the individual and the Absolute. "But in whatever sense or in whatever way our thoughts and actions form part of the divine experience, we know that it is a sense which does not prevent them from being ours. We were agreed that no speculative difficulties could override this primary certainty." [42] Its appeal to thinkers of other trends is thus indubi-

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[35] Ibidem, p. 267.
[36] Ibidem, p. 293.
[37] Ibidem, p. 409 et seq.
[38] Ibidem, p. 413.
[39] Ibidem, p. 202.
[40] Ibidem, p. 285.
[41] Ibidem, p. 293.
[42] Ibidem, p. 391.

tably weakened. Absolutism is one of several competing theories, all of which endeavor to give us a rationale of things as they are, and it cannot hope to disestablish other theories when it avers that the difficulties inherent in some of its most important tenets are unanswerable. To declare that our description of an important and integral part of a theory will involve contradictions, to affirm that it is beyond the range of possibility for us to conceive a doctrine that should be understood, is tantamount to demanding that we should silence our persistent questionings as to the worth of the theory. This is a procedure that will hardly recommend itself to a hard-minded thinker. The natural reaction of such a philosopher, in view of the fact that absolutism is devoid of empirical verification, will be one of doubt if not of denial. Any system that is proposed for our acceptance must satisfy the rigid and exacting demands of reason. It cannot expect acceptance if it does not meet these demands.

Not only is this theory mute in the face of grave difficulties, but it is based ultimately on an unproved assumption.[43] The assumption is that the values revealed to man are objective. The whole system of Pringle-Pattison rests on this ground—which he admits is, from the nature of the case, unprovable. Man is the noblest flower of creation, he is that in which the world comes to life and expression, and therefore the values revealed to him must be objective and real. Pringle-Pattison by way of substantiating this assumption avers that it "has the whole weight of a philosophical system," viz., idealism, behind it."[44] This is somewhat naive. What if pragmatists or phenomenalists or realists impugn, as they do, the worth of the idealistic theory? The fact that idealism asserts the objectivity of these ideals means nothing except to one indoctrinated with idealism. If the truth of the idealistic theory could be proved independently of this assumption, and if it could in turn verify the truth of this assumption, idealism would have made out a strong case for itself, but as it is, the circular reasoning involved leaves the question of its interpretation of reality suspended *in vacuo*.

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[43] Ibidem, pp. 235-236. The same objection holds against the absolutism of Bradley and Bosanquet.

[44] Ibidem, p. 235.

Furthermore, the theory that the urge of the cosmos towards self-consciousness is achieved in man, and that in man God beholds and enjoys Himself, is not without its difficulties.[45] This seems to mean that God becomes conscious in man. In the light of current scientific teaching on the comparatively recent origin of man in relation to the rest of the universe, this view does not commend itself to the defenders of theism. It would make that part of the cosmos which came into being before man the product of an unconscious deity, who became conscious only after the emergence of man into the cosmic scheme. The difficulties in the way of this opinion are too many and great to recount.

If the above statement, on the other hand, signifies that through man the universe burgeons forth into consciousness, it would appear to be more lyrical than philosophic. Man is an integral part of the universe; he knows the universe of which he is a part. But this only means that man can achieve a knowledge of reality and God, not that the objects he knows develop into a fuller truth. Man, in a word, becomes, through an increase of knowledge, more profoundly cognizant of reality. This does not necessarily imply that the objects man knows acquire consciousness. They are known but not knowing. This view of Pringle-Pattison seems fanciful owing to the very evident differences between the psychical and the physical. Man's connection with the universe is not as intimate as Pringle-Pattison would have us believe. Neither are thought and reality as closely identified as he holds. It is his idealistic bent which forced him into positions such as these which are so difficult to maintain in the face of the dictates of common sense.

Pringle-Pattison's rejection of Bosanquet's view on the relation of human minds to God has been indicated. But while his own theory evades the evident difficulties of his mentor, it does not seem to do justice to the fact of selfhood. His absolutism compels him to reject the self-subsistence of minds. All the evidence which proclaims this self-subsistence is overruled on the ground that the individual mind is the expression, or organ, or focus of the world in which it lives. To pit a philosophic theory against facts, and to expect that theory to prevail over those facts, is a species of despotic dogmatism.

[45] Ibidem, p. 111.

CHAPTER VII

The Absolute in the Philosophies of McTaggart, Haldane, Jones, and Turner

The muster roll of contemporary absolutistic philosophers is long—too long to permit individual attention being paid to all of them. They all travel the main road of neo-Hegelianism. They add to the neo-Hegelian credo or they subtract from it, as the case may be, but the cleavages which differentiate them are relatively unimportant in view of the solidarity of their absolutism. Out of this welter of thinkers the four mentioned above have been singled out for attention. The selection is perhaps arbitrary. If it has any justification it consists in this, that they all may be taken as fairly typical exponents of the latest modes of absolutism.

The Philosophy of McTaggart

Dr. McTaggart has won acclaim as an interpreter of the thought of Hegel. While his interpretation of the great absolutist has not always met with approval among the Hegelians, it is admitted that he is the most striking of all the English commentators who have endeavored to unravel the perplexities of the system of their master. In his criticism of Hegel, McTaggart has emphasized the pluralism which is generally lost sight of by Hegelians. It is this note of pluralism which looms large in his own system of thought, and which distinguishes it from orthodox neo-Hegelianism.

McTaggart interprets Hegel's Absolute Idea as spirit. Spirit, however, is necessarily differentiated, and hence "reality is a unity differentiated into a plurality (or a plurality combined into a unity) in such a way that the whole meaning and significance of the unity lies in its being differentiated into that particular plurality, and that the whole meaning and significance of the parts of that plurality lies in its being combined into that

particular unity."[1] The unity which unifies the plural units constituting the Absolute, and into which the Absolute is differentiated, is not extrinsic to them. This unity is not the sum-total of these units, nor is it in them as separate units.[2] This unity, or Absolute, is, however, in each individual differentiation individually, and it is, moreover, the bond which unites the individuals together. Now since differentiation seems to be the negation of unity, if different individuals are to be united, the unity (or Absolute) must be a system of conscious individuals, otherwise the whole could not be in the part.[3] In other words, the Absolute is not only in but for the consciousness of the individuals comprising it, i.e., the Absolute is not only present in the individual, but it is cognitionally reproduced in the individual.[4]

The Absolute is, then, a unity of persons, but it is not a person. It has the ultimate and deepest kind of unity, a unity "in which the parts have no meaning but their unity, while that unity, again, has no meaning but its differentiations."[5] It is moreover a spiritual unity—but this latter fact does not imply that it is a personality. The Absolute is a unity of system, and not a unity of self-consciousness. Its nature can be best understood in its analogy to social experience. In the latter we have an illustration of the fact that an objective unity can contain the whole of which it is the part. All societal experience is of this character—the individual is a part of society and yet he cognizes all of it. McTaggart's own favorite analogy is that of a college.[6] A college is a unity, a unity of spirit, and yet it is not a person. It is a unity of persons, though impersonal in itself. Similarly although the differentiations of the Absolute are persons, the Absolute itself is not a person. A further reason which indicates the impersonality of the Absolute is that all conscious personal beings are, and must be, aware of the non-ego. But the Absolute is all-inclusive, and hence for it there can be no non-ego. Since personality is an essential characteristic of

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[1] Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 9; see also p. 7.
[2] Ibidem, p. 19.
[3] Ibidem, p. 254; see also A Commentary on Hegel's Logic, p. 307.
[4] Studies in Hegelian Dialectic, p. 209.
[5] Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 58.
[6] Ibidem, p. 58.

God, the Absolute is not God, and the obvious conclusion is that God is non-existent.

Criticism of McTaggart

The frankly pluralistic tone of McTaggart's philosophy affords him an avenue of escape from one of the great difficulties which embarrass absolutists, viz., the relation of the finite mind to the Absolute, but it has, in turn, involved him in other and equally devastating difficulties.

In the first place, is it true that the whole nature of a social, or organic, unity consists in the unity which it has for the individuals which comprise it? It is true that the human individuals composing society recognize the society to which they belong as a society. But is not society more than this awareness in its members? Is it only an ideal entity? McTaggart himself seems to distinguish between the cognitional unity and the ontological unity which belongs to society.[7] There must be an ontological unity which belongs to society independently of its being known, or else the knowledge of the unity of society in the minds of individuals would have no ground. And if a societal system exists it must be composed of individuals, else it would not be what it is. It would seem to follow that each individual must be more than the mere recognition of his harmony with the other members of this organic system. Each individual must be a real entity if he is to have the recognition of this fact of harmony. If the individual consisted solely of the recognition of this harmony, there would be no harmony recognized, because, on the one hand, there would be no individuals to recognize the harmony which belongs to them as constitutive elements of society, and, on the other, if individuals are not real there cannot be a real harmonious world resulting from them. A real world cannot result from the relating of terms which in themselves are nothing. Hence it appears that McTaggart's assertion, that the essence of social unity consists in the fact that it is for individuals, and that the essence of each individual consists in the fact that the unity is for them, is logically indefensible.[8]

McTaggart hints at another weakness of his theory when he admits that if it is to work "it would seem to follow that every

[7] Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, pp. 14, 25, 26.

[8] See Rogers, English and American Philosophy, p. 302.

self must be in complete and conscious harmony with the whole of the universe."[9] Are there any selves who are in such complete and conscious harmony? Is their knowledge of the organic unity of the world complete? Is there a knowledge of the "whole" world? Is McTaggart himself the focus of such comprehensive experience? The facts are against him. There are no individual selves with the knowledge which he posits as necessary. As a ripost to this objection he takes refuge in the typically idealistic complaisance that if we assume selves to be perfect then the difficulty disappears. For "every self is . . . in reality eternal, and its true qualities are only seen in so far as it is considered as eternal."[10] But this leaves us enmeshed in the difficulty of comprehending how the eternal, timeless Egos, which are beyond the reach of our knowledge, can give rise to the temporal egos of which we are aware. This is but a phase of the same difficulty which irks the monistic absolutist, and McTaggart does not seem to have avoided it by his advocacy of pluralism.

But even if it be conceded that the temporal Egos of this world are the phenomenal representations of noumenal and timeless egos, difficulties still assert themselves. The noumenal Egos would be preexistent relatively to their phenomenal counterparts, and the doctrine of preexistence is not only a gratuitous assumption, but it runs contrary to so many of the assured findings of science that it is quite universally rejected today.[11]

The Absolutism of Richard Burdon Haldane

The philosophical thought of Lord Haldane (1856-1928), Viscount of Cloan, has been elaborated amidst the demands of a political career. He is avowedly an Hegelian.[12] But to his Hegelian idealism he has added apposite elements taken from the relativity theory of Einstein, as well as from the theory of emergent evolution.[13] He thus stands somewhat apart from the orthodox idealists.

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[9] Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 34.

[10] Mind, N. S., vol. 9, p. 388.

[11] Rashdall, Philosophy and Religion, p. 123 et seq.; Haldar, Neo-Hegelianism, p. 459 et seq.

[12] Pathway to Reality, vol. 2, p. 85.

[13] See his Reign of Relativity.

Like Hegel, Haldane believes that reality is self-comprehensive mind. Reality is our universe fully comprehended.[14] The pathway to reality, i.e., to our knowledge of reality, lies through the examination of this world in which we live. Nothing can be real unless it is intelligible. Meaning cannot be separated from experience, and hence "reality lies in the foundational character of knowledge, and in the distinction between perceiver and perceived, knower and known, as being distinctions falling inside the entirety of that foundational character, inasmuch as they are made by and within knowledge itself."[15] But while reality is one, our knowledge of reality "discloses itself as of degrees and at levels which are determined by the character of the concepts it employs. But these degrees and levels imply each other. They are not distinct entities apart. They are all of them required for the interpretation of the full character of reality.[16] The conceptions employed by scientists in their various spheres are but the stages through which the mind passes in the process of its effort at self-comprehension. The same is true of all concepts. The various levels of reality demand that the conceptions valid at one level are not valid at another. Conceptions must be of various kinds, as the theory of relativity proves, but the conceptions of one level do not negate or nullify the conceptions of another level. While the validity of one conception is limited to that degree or level of reality to which it belongs, no one conception or set of conceptions can dominate or supplant other conceptions which are applicable to other levels of reality. The latter are not independently existing—they are but phases of one reality. These various conceptions, therefore, are but fragmentary, having to do only with their correlative degree of reality, and hence they are supplementary to each other; they all serve to give us a more comprehensive knowledge of reality as it is in itself.[17]

Haldane is of the opinion that what deters us from admitting that reality is ultimately knowledge is the view that knowledge is a characteristic, or a property, of finite mind. The latter is thought to be a species of reality on which extramental reality

[14] Pathway to Reality, vol. 1, p. 17 et seq.

[15] Reign of Relativity, p. 27.

[16] Ibidem, p. 124.

[17] The Pathway to Reality, vol. 1, p. 119; see also his The Philosophy of Humanism, p. 62 et seq.; p. 300 et seq.

acts and thus causes knowledge. But the mind is not a thing, an individual object, at all. We must distinguish between finite minds when faced by the exigencies of daily life, it is true. "Unless I, by an abstraction, which, for the purpose of social intercourse, is essential, look upon myself as a thing with a particular mind and history attached to it, as a being standing in social relationships, it would be impossible for me to conduct any conversation with you or to live in a common social world." [18]

Ultimately, however, the distinction between finite minds is but relative. Minds are apparently differentiated because they have feelings which are private and incommunicable. But feelings apart from thought are nothing, and thought always has the nature of a "whole." While thought is focussed in an individual center of experience, it ever reaches out beyond the limits of the self.[19] This fact forces us to the conclusion that experience "is a whole containing within itself the I who know and the entire field of knowledge, with the conceptual and sentient aspects distinguished within it through its own abstractions." [20] What are uncritically thought to be finite centers of experience existing in time and space are, therefore, when viewed from a higher level of thought, nothing but mind, or the ultimate unity, in a state of self-differentiation. We, of course, cannot fabricate an adequate concept of this unity because we are subject in thought to the physical limitations of our organism, but "by reflection we may get towards the grasp of the concrete truth that this is the final conception of the self, the real foundation and meaning of experience, and that it is really actualized in experience." [21]

Haldane denies that God is a thing or substance, because a thing is, of its very nature, limited and distinct. God may be conceived to be a subject if our conception also includes the object which exists for the subject; the object must not be differentiated from the subject because God "must not stand for less than entirety, and such an entirety must be that within which all distinctions and resulting relations can fall. . . . The

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[18] The Pathway to Reality, vol. 2, p. 103.
[19] The Reign of Relativity, p. 148.
[20] Ibidem, p. 155.
[21] The Pathway to Reality, vol. 1, p. 112.

mind of God must have in its Other itself, and must recognise in that Other just Himself in the form of otherness." [22] God cannot, therefore, be other than the world.[23] Not only are God and the world identical, but there is no real distinction between man and God as objects of knowledge. The doctrine of relativity proves that man and God are but one mind which discloses itself "in different degrees or logical stages in the progress of reality, but as identical throughout divergences in form." [24] The essential nature of the divine life is beyond our ken. Such a knowledge can belong to a divine mind alone. But we can rise above the organic trammels of our knowledge and we can establish the conclusion that God is, that He is in the world, and that He is the world.

The system of Lord Haldane will not be subjected to criticism. Although he has attempted to buttress his theory by the introduction of new conceptions, it remains a thorough-going idealism, and as such it is guilty of all the defects that have been pointed out in preceding pages. The same is true of the theory that follows. It will be summarized but not evaluated.

The Absolutism of Sir Henry Jones

Sir Henry Jones (1852-1922), a student of Edward Caird, and his successor in the chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, does not reduce reality to thought, nor does he oppose the one to the other. The dualistic view, he maintains, makes knowledge impossible. But while thought and reality are not opposed, neither are they identical. Knowledge is the self-comprehension of reality. He holds "that knowledge is the self-revelation of reality in thought and that our thought is the instrument of that revelation." [25] The duality of subject and object in the knowing process is only apparent. Ultimately thought and reality are aspects of the same thing. "Mind is not except in relation to its object, neither is the object except in relation to the subject.

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[22] Ibidem, vol. 1, p. 156.

[23] Ibidem, vol. 1, p. 16. "It is just in the world that is here and now when fully comprehended and thought out that we shall find God, and in finding God shall find the reality of that world in Him."

[24] The Reign of Relativity, p. 398.

[25] Philosophy of Lotze, p. 370.

The dependence is interdependence, and the real is never only one of its aspects." [26]

That there are differences and contrasts in the universe we know must be granted, but their existence does not blind a reflective mind to the unity that lies in their very diversification. A clear proof of the unity of apparently discordant elements is found in the correlation between the various fields of man's knowledge. It is commonly thought that man's secular life and religious life are diverse—as are philosophy and common sense. Reflection, however, shows they are complements of each other. Man's secular life is meaningless when divorced from religion.[27]

The existence of the Absolute, the immanent ground of the universe, is the justification of religion, for the Absolute of philosophy is identical with the God of religion. The Absolute is the harmonious whole which sustains the various elements in the universe—it is the unity that expresses itself in finite objects, in the order of nature, and more especially in the intelligent actions of mankind. It is a self-conscious being, dynamic and operative, working out its purposes through the changes in the world. Its essence is self-manifestation; without this it would not exist.[28]

The Philosophy of J. E. Turner

Dr. Turner's philosophy, as presented in his two latest volumes, is a variation on the usual Hegelian theme—it is an amalgam of absolutism with transcendental theism.[29] In the first of these books he establishes the existence of the Absolute. The basis for his belief in the Absolute is the characteristics of the universe as revealed to us through the discoveries of modern science. These characteristics are two. First, science has proved that the universe is structurally an intricate, automatic mechanism. Secondly, it has proved that the evolutionary process, in both the organic and inorganic worlds, is a fact. Neither of these facts are self-explanatory. Their explanation is an Absolute Being—or God.

"The Nature of Deity" is devoted to an attempt to arrive at

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[26] Ibidem, p. 164.
[27] A Faith That Enquires, p. 73 et seq.
[28] Ibidem, p. 360.
[29] Personality and Reality; The Nature of Deity.

a knowledge of God. God is defined as "the personal factor of the psycho-physical universe, within which it (God) is omnipotent." [30]

God is the primus—but not the primus inter pares—of the universe. He is at once immanent in, and transcendent from, the universe. How can this paradox be solved? Turner answers that the human ego is a dominant real, in fact the dominant real, of the material universe.[31] The distinction between self and environment is always present in conscious beings. The higher the being in the scale of reality, the more developed is this distinction.[32] Not only are men conscious of this distinction between themselves and their environment, but they dominate their environment. The higher the level of mental attainment, the greater the control of one's physical and social surroundings. If this conception of the finite self is expanded, we are enabled to form an approximate concept of the nature of God, as well as of His relations to the universe.

The Divine Self knows its "environment," i.e., the universe, in an infinite way. The universe is, therefore, both the object of God's knowledge, as well as the sphere of His activity.[33] God is transcendent as regards the universe, but not absolutely so. He is not to be identified with the universe. Yet in a sense He is immanent in the universe, viz., "in the same way that the mind of a thinker pervades the realm with which he is concerned." [34] An inventor of a mechanism personally transcends the materials of his machine as well as its independent working. But he is immanent in the machine in the sense that the latter manifests his intellectual capacity, and also in the sense that it attains the end for which he designed it.[35] Similarly God is not existentially identified with the material universe. The latter is His product—but it is not He. Nevertheless He is functionally immanent in the universe since the latter is the expression of the capacity of His mind, and well as the expression of the attainment of His purposes.

This terse summation of the thought of Doctor Turner fit-

[30] Personality and Reality, p. 158.
[31] Ibidem, chapters 5 and 6.
[32] The Nature of Deity, p. 26 et seq.
[33] Ibidem, p. 33 et seq.
[34] Ibidem, p. 66.
[35] Ibidem, p. 70 et seq.

tingly brings to a close the delineation and criticism of some of the outstanding representatives of the absolutistic movement, both because his works are the latest in point of publication, and because they exhibit a tendency to break away from the monistic conception of the Absolute.

Monistic absolutism has been subject to a withering fire of criticism, especially in the past few years. A resurgent realism, and personalistic idealism, which is an offshoot of monistic idealism, have both centered their attacks on it. Absolutism is a hardy creed, however, and while it is retreating in the field of epistemology, it still continues to dominate the thought of some of the most important of British thinkers. Among its adherents, in addition to those discussed above, may be mentioned William Wallace, D. G. Ritchie, J. H. Muirhead, J. S. Mackenzie, S. S. Laurie, John Watson, R. L. Nettleship, C. C. J. Webb, J. D. Baillie, A. E. Taylor, Harold Joachim, R. F. A. Hoernlé, and Robert Adamson, in his earlier writings.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

The criticisms of absolutism given in the preceding pages were cumulative. Some of them were relevant to idealism in general, while others were apposite to particular species of that system of thought. Another criticism, one that applies to all systems of monistic absolutism, will bring this discussion to an end.

This criticism is based on the attempt of absolutists to give the Absolute a specific nature. All absolutists make this latter claim. The Absolute is the Mediator of relations, the ultimate Thinker, the Absolute Spirit, or the Absolute Mind. Whatever the Absolute is, it is a reality or entity with a definite essence or character. None of the absolutists cited in the above pages are agnostic in their view of the Absolute; none of them are content with affirming that the Absolute is. They all assign it a definite nature.

This latter procedure is an attempt to find some concept which can be predicated of the Absolute, and of it alone. This concept must be the exclusive property of the Absolute since the Absolute is alone all-inclusive. It is this endeavor of the absolutist—the assigning of a positive nature to the Absolute—which seems to contravene the canons of logic.

Logic has always held that the specific differences of a species cannot belong to the genus of that species. The genus contains in its comprehension only what its subsumed species have in common, while the specific difference is what differentiates the species of the genus from one another. For example, the specific difference "rationality" which differentiates "man" from "brute," both of which are species of the genus "animal," cannot be contained in the comprehension of "animal." If it were, all animals would be rational. It is the presence of this quality in some animals and its absence in others that gives rise to the species contained under the genus. Climbing the Porphyrian

tree, the next higher genus, "living being," contains likewise none of the specific differences of its species in its comprehension. And so on until the summum genus is reached, entity or being, which has as its subordinate species, existent and non-existent subsistences. "Entity" signifies that which can be thought consistently, i. e., in accord with the data of experience and with the canons of reasoning. However, it is possible to push beyond the genus of consistent-thought entity, because it can be regarded as a species of a genus which has as its other species "things which cannot be consistently thought," or "contradictory things," such as square circles. This genus would be the genus of mentionable things, i. e., of things which can be talked about, or for which we have words.

It is essential to the Absolute that it be all-inclusive, no matter what other positive characteristics it may have. And if it is all-inclusive it must be identified with the summum genus, since the latter alone is all-inclusive. Obviously no subordinate genus can include everything. But if the Absolute is to be a positive reality it cannot be merely a "mentionable thing"—like a square circle. On the other hand, if it shares any of the characteristics of the species of the summum genus it cannot be the summum genus. In other words, no absolutist would admit that the Absolute was merely a mentionable thing. He would insist that it is a real thing. In fact they all insist it is the ultimately real thing. And even the most cautious of them insist it has other attributes. Bradley, for example, holds it is self-consistent. But logically this claim cannot be made for the Absolute, since it is a summum genus, is a merely mentionable thing, and therefore it may be self-contradictory as well as self-consistent. The differentiation between self-contradictory and self-consistent entities is found only in the species of the summum genus, and not in the genus itself.

In the face of this objection, what can the Absolute be? The very attempt to assign it a nature is halted by the inexorable laws of logic. The monistic ripost would be that this difficulty could be answered if our knowledge were commensurate with the knowledge of the Absolute. As noted above, this is not a fair answer, especially to those who deny the existence of the Absolute.[1]

[1] Spaulding, op. cit., p. 354 et seq.

Other arguments might be adduced against the theory of absolutism. It has a larger scope than has been indicated in the above pages. It has entered, for example, the field of ethics, as well as the field of the philosophy of the state. An adequate discussion of the tenets of absolutism in these and other fields would demand a discussion which is beyond the scope of this endeavor. It may be said, however, that in these latter fields of thought it has met with much opposition. This discussion of absolutism has been confined to its epistemological bearings. This has seemed advisable because it is primarily an epistemological movement. No matter how far-flung the nature of the problems to which it has addressed itself, no matter how many the fields of knowledge on which it has impinged, it had its genesis as a theory of knowledge, and its worth as a theory can best be evaluated in the light of its epistemology.

The *fons et origo* of absolutism, and to a realistic mind, the head and front of its offending, is its identification of thought and reality. This is its fundamental presupposition and the basis of all its beliefs. Its theory of state, its theory of religion, its theory of ethics, have that belief as their foundation. The chief arguments for the "reality is thought" theory are the egocentric predicament, and the internality of relations, especially the internality of the cognitive relation.

As regards the former argument, the idealist contention, that "all we know is known," and that therefore it is utterly futile to discuss things which are supposed to exist outside of the cognitive relation, is a non-sequitur. It proves that "all we know is known"—which is a truism—but it does not prove that "all reality is known." The latter is the point at issue, not the former. From the very nature of the case the predicament is unavoidable, since we cannot know without knowing, and it is unavoidable whether we hold knowledge affects the nature of the objects known or not. But the fact that there is a predicament is no warrant for the idealistic claim that objects "before" the mind are but inseparable states "of" the mind. The world is experienceable, in a word, but it need not be experienced in its totality, i. e., by finite minds. At least the idealist has not disproved this latter view. Hence there is no reason for adopting the idealistic position.

As to the internality of relations, if this theory were held to

rigidly, it would imply that we could not know the truth about a part of the universe without knowing the whole of the universe, and this would make our knowledge, or what we take for knowledge, nugatory. Furthermore, if things are constituted by their relations, the universe would be a reticulation of relations without terms which the relations could relate. As to the internality of the cognitive relation, it is true that anything that can be known has the relation of being a possibly-known thing to any consciousness that can know it. But any new qualities which the object gains by reason of its being known in no way negate the properties it had before it was known. It has these latter qualities after it was known just as it had them before it was known. The only change in it is that it is now "known" whereas before it was "unknown." The passing of an object in or out of consciousness does not alter its nature. It is what it is whether it is known or unknown.

The arguments based on the ego-centric predicament and the internality of relations are supposed to prove that the existence of reality depends on mind. Mind may be either finite or infinite. Empirical or phenomenalistic idealism holds that the finite mind is a sufficient ground for the existence and meaning of objects. Absolute idealism holds, however, that the finite world cannot be adequately expressed in terms of the experience of finite minds. While it is true that finite minds are the only kind of minds of which we are cognizant, still the inexorable character of the laws of nature shows that finite minds do not dictate to nature. The character of experience indicates rather that nature dictates its laws to the mind, and consequently that finite mind is, of itself, not a sufficient ground for the explanation of nature. Hence, since idealists still adhere to the principle that mind is necessary for the existence and meaning of reality, they posit the existence of an absolute mind, whose experience, they allege, is the necessary ground for the system of nature. They, no more, than any other school of philosophers, have any experience of this mind. Its existence is a postulate, demanded by the necessary dependence of reality on mind. While their positing of the Absolute rids them of the many difficulties which confront their phenomenalistic brethren, it has plunged them into difficulties no less numerous and troublesome, because they have been forced by the exigencies of their assumption to iden-

tify reality with the experience of the Absolute. It is their commitment to the reality-experience doctrine that has made them the object of attack from all quarters of the philosophic world.

In the first place, their account of the universe is contrary to experience. Any mind which is not sicklied o'er with the pale cast of idealism experiences the universe as mind-independent and plural.[2] The universe gives no evidence of being an appearance or an adjectival mode of an absolute thinker. That idealists experience it as mind-independent and plural is shown by their efforts to prove that it is mind-dependent and non-plural. Even if the universe were what the idealists claim it is, there would still remain the difficulty of explaining why the realistic view of the universe, which is the view common to all thinkers excepting those of the idealistic school, is but an illusion. Any system which runs counter to an established view must be solidly grounded, and must be based on convincing arguments. When the revolutionary character of absolutism is contrasted with the reasons advanced for it, the discrepancy between the two is clearly seen.

In the second place, as has been mentioned above, the peculiar individuality of finite centers of experience, their imperviousness, their privacy, is a fact that does not fit in with the absolutist hypothesis. The fact cannot be gainsaid. If our consciousness attests anything, it is that our minds are individual. The attempt to integrate this fact into the absolutist theory has met with little success. Absolutists themselves are not in agreement on this question of the blending of the infinite mind with finite minds. Some apparently deny the fact of individuality altogether. The more factual-minded of them endeavor to retain a semblance of individuality in finite minds. But whatever their solutions of this problem may be, their very efforts to solve it is a confession of their concern in its regard. And to a non-idealistic thinker their efforts seem to betray an animosity against the facts. Philosophic thought should be an explanation, not a nullification, of facts.

Not only do the above facts contravene the theory of abso-

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[2] "Mind-independent" here means that the universe gives no evidence of its being mind, or the experience of mind. It does not mean that the universe is not experienced as the product of mind.

lutism, but its explanation of the "how" of these facts is eminently unsatisfactory. Even if the existence of the Absolute be granted, how can it manifest itself in a finite world which is identical with it, and yet which is, largely, everything the Absolute is not? Furthermore, how can human minds be but vehicles or modes of the Absolute in view of the errors, illusions, contradictions, and corrupt moral doctrines, which characterize their thoughts? Does Green give us the answer to this question when he admits that finite and infinite consciousness "cannot be comprehended in a single conception"? [3]

The Gordian knot of the "how" of these questions cannot be cut by the usual absolutistic retort that absolute knowledge would enable us to know the "how." This is tantamount to shirking questions which must be answered.

The fact of the matter is that although absolutists decry pantheism, they verge perilously near it. Pringle-Pattison, for example, deprecates the crudities of the "lower" pantheism, but he thereby seems to admit that he and his fellow thinkers profess a "higher" pantheism.[4] If they can be classified as pantheists, even as sophisticated or sublimated pantheists, theirs is the thankless task of sustaining the onus that inevitably attaches to all adherents of that system.

Absolutism and Religion

It is obvious that Stirling's sanguine hope for the regeneration of theism by means of absolutism has not been realized. Absolutism was to be an anodyne which would put an end to the devastating maladies of naturalism and materialism. It was to be more—it was to rectify religious thought, and supplant current theism with a more adequate conception of God, one which would be hardy enough to withstand the attacks of science and philosophy. The outlines of absolutistic thought given above show that the Absolute is not the Christian God. The leaders of the left wing of this movement have positively disclaimed all theistic leanings, while the leaders of the right wing are hard put in their endeavors to show that the Absolute can supplant the God of Christianity.

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[3] Prolegomena, par. 68; see also Sturt, Idola Theatri, p. 238.
[4] Idea of God, p. 219; p. 253.

The acerbity with which the absolutists speak of the God of Christianity should be noted. They all disparage the doctrine of God as commonly held. They criticize the arguments advanced by conventional theologians to prove the existence of God.[5] They also dilate on the evils inherent in the belief in a transcendent God.[6] In fact their whole system is a polemic against the possibility of God's being transcendent. However, their criticisms both of the proofs for the existence of God and of the Christian concept of His nature are made from an idealistic standpoint, and they need not, therefore, be examined in detail. Not only that, but they are based on misconceptions of what true theism holds.

Their strictures that God is no mere spectator of the world, that He is no passive onlooker of the world-process, are true, but they are irrelevant. God is immanent in the world. God "est in omnibus per potentiam, in quantum omnia ejus potestati subduntur; est per praesentiam in omnibus in quantum omnia nuda sunt et aperta oculis ejus; est in omnibus per essentiam, in quantum adest omnibus ut causa essendi."[7] God is in the world in the sense that He conserves it, and in the sense that He concurs in the exercise of the powers of created beings. He is immanent in the world in the sense that He comprehends the world in its entirety and in an infinite way. This species of immanence is at a far remove from existential immanence, it is true, but it serves to answer the absolutistic objection based on the supposed aloofness of God from creation. And furthermore it is not open to the many telling objections levelled against existential immanence.

Again, it is urged by absolutists that the existence of finite creatures apart from God is incompatible with His infinity.[8] But again the absolutist objection is based on a misapprehension of the nature of created being and on the nature of infinity. Created beings are real, and they are not parts of the Deity. This, however, is not a contradiction. Infinity does not mean

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[5] For example, see Caird, Philosophy of Religion, p. 133 et seq.; p. 323 et seq.; Pringle-Pattison, Idea of God, p. 249 et seq.

[6] Pringle-Pattison, ibidem, p. 411 et seq.

[7] St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, q. 8, art. 3; De Potentia, q. 5, art. 2; Summa contra Gentiles, chapters 64 to 79.

[8] See, for example, Caird, Fundamental Ideas of Christianity, vol. 1, p. 88; Philosophy of Religion, p. 141.

totality. God is infinite but He is not everything. Infinity implies that an infinite being cannot lack any reality in the line in which it is infinite, and that there is no other being which has a greater degree of any perfection than the infinite being. It does not mean that no other beings can exist, nor that they cannot have their own perfections. Infinity does imply that the perfections of creatures add nothing to the perfection of God because He is infinite. He has all the perfections of creatures in an infinite degree. But His being and the being of creatures are of two different kinds. The being of God is underived, while the being of creatures is derived from Him. The term "being" when applied to God and creatures has only an analogical signification. Absolutists apply the term to God and creatures univocally, and in this misapplication lies the cause of their difficulty. Their own view, that God and the universe is a modification or a manifestation of God, is not without its difficulties. For if these words mean anything it would seem to follow that, since God is in finite things, He is subject to the limitations of finite things, and that He is, therefore, finite.[9]

Naturally the idea of divine creation, as that term is used in theism, finds no favor in absolutistic minds.[10] Without going into the merits of the theory of creation it can be said in its favor that it is at least clear and intelligible. Creation, being a divine act, cannot be fully envisaged by human minds. But it is not a self-contradictory theory, and it has intelligibility. Can the same be said for the process by which the Absolute is said to produce the universe? The thinkers of this school, despite their cavalier attitude towards the theory of creation, cannot describe the process whereby the Absolute externates itself in the universe. And if they could offer us a coherent description of the production of the universe, they would still be confronted by the very real difficulty of explaining how an all-inclusive, infinite being could reproduce itself in finite beings. The principle of limitation necessary for the production of these finite realities cannot be in God since He is infinite. It cannot be outside of God since He is infinite, and He cannot, therefore, be subject to a principle which is extrinsic to Him.

[9] St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, q. 7; Contra Gentiles, I, 43.
[10] Pringle-Pattison, ibidem, p. 249 et seq.

The other criticisms levelled at orthodox Christianity in this regard may be passed over, in view of the fact that this is an attempt to evaluate the truth of absolutism, and not a defense of theism. A strong case could be made out for the superiority of the God of Christianity over the Absolute. It might be shown that the Absolute fails utterly to satisfy the demands of religion. We have seen what absolutism has to say as regards the status of the individual. What of free will, immortality, sin, and the other factors which bulk so large in religion? "Free will is a lingering chimera" we are told.[11] Immortality means, to an absolutist, that souls are eternal inasmuch as they are manifestations of the Deity, but personal immortality, as ordinarily understood, is a fiction, just as is the naive idea of personality itself. Evil is relegated to the realm of appearance—as it must be if the Absolute is all-inclusive. How evil can be but appearance or illusion, and still not be a part of an all-inclusive Absolute, is a question that is not satisfactorily answered.

Negatively, absolutism has done praiseworthy service in the cause of religion by its criticism of naturalism. It has pleaded for a spiritualistic interpretation of human life—and because of this it has merited acclaim. Its merits, however, should not blind us to its defects. No theory of life, however true, can be buttressed by arguments which are fallacious, and those who profess a belief in the spiritualistic meaning of human life must reject, in the name of truth, the efforts of absolutist philosophers. ". . . I believe it is of the utmost importance for the leaders of the religious life to understand its [absolute idealism's] true significance and to refuse to be hypnotized by its noble vocabulary. As a support for the religious life Absolute Idealism is a broken reed. It contains elements and tendencies essential to its very structure which are bound to lead to the repudiation of most of the things which religion holds most dear. . . . In my opinion, no one can maintain its truth without flying in the face of some of the most indubitable facts of life." [12]

A fitting, if mordant, conclusion to this discussion may be phrased in the words of L. T. Hobhouse. "Yet, in the main, the idealistic movement has swelled the current of retrogression.

[11] Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 435, note.
[12] Pratt, op. cit., p. 213.

It is itself, in fact, one expression of the general reaction against the plain, human, rationalistic way of looking at life and its problems. Every institution and every belief is for it alike a manifestation of a spiritual principle, and thus for everything there is an inner and more spiritual interpretation. Hence, vulgar and stupid beliefs can be held with a refined and enlightened meaning, known only to him who so holds them, a convenient doctrine for men of a highly-rarefied understanding, but for those of a coarser texture who learn from them apt to degenerate into charlatanism. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that the effect of idealism on the world in general has been to sap intellectual and moral sincerity, to excuse men in their consciences for professing beliefs which on the meaning ordinarily attached to them they do not hold, to soften the edges of all hard contrasts between right and wrong, truth and falsity, to throw a gloss over stupidity, and prejudice, and caste, and tradition, to weaken the bases of reason, and disincline men to the searching analysis of their habitual ways of thinking. In these ways idealism has had a more subtly retrograde influence than any of the cruder scientific creeds which it condemns, and has thus prepared the way for the scepticism which has been the popular philosophy of the last ten years."[13]

[13] Democracy and Reaction, pp. 78-79.

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